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SIR WILLIAM MAYNARD GOMM

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Field Marshall

SIR WM MAYNARD COMM, G.C.B., &c. &c.

Colonel of the Coldstream Guards

ÆT 84.

LONDON, JOHN MURRAY, 1881.

LETTERS AND JOURNALS

OF

FIELD-MARSHAL

SIR WILLIAM MAYNARD GOMM, G.C.B.

COMMANDER-IN-CHIEF OF INDIA, CONSTABLE OF THE TOWER OF LONDON

&c. &c.

FROM 1799 TO WATERLOO, 1815

EDITED

By FRANCIS CULLING CARR-GOMM

H.M.'S MADRAS CIVIL SERVICE

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'How youngly he began to serve his country,
How long continued' CORIOLANUS

With Portraits

LONDON
JOHN MURRAY, ALBEMARLE STREET
1881

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TO

HIS ROYAL HIGHNESS

GEORGE, DUKE OF CAMBRIDGE, K.G. &c.

Field-Marshal Commanding-in-Chief Her Majesty's Army

This Brief Memorial

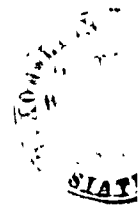
OF A FELLOW-SOLDIER WHOSE HONEST WORTH AND LOYAL SERVICES

WERE VALUED AND ACKNOWLEDGED BY

FOUR GENERATIONS OF THE ROYAL FAMILY

IS, BY HIS ROYAL HIGHNESS'S GRACIOUS PERMISSION

Humbly Dedicated



PREFACE.

THE PAPERS of Field-Marshal Sir William Gomm were in some measure arranged by himself; but Lady Gomm, during her brief widowhood, set herself most religiously to collect them, and in some way prepare them for publication. Her will bequeathed all the manuscripts to General Lord Mark Kerr, the Hon. Edward Douglas, and Miss Augusta Howard Vyse, to be retained or published as they should think fit. They confided the papers to my care, and requested me to examine and edit them. I have at present only been able to take the earlier portion of these letters; but they to a great extent form so independent and complete a chapter—not only of his life, but of public history—that it has been decided to publish them separately, leaving to some future opportunity the project of preparing for the public the later voluminous and more general papers.

Although these letters relate to days long gone by, yet even now such a genuine, truthful, and intelligent record as they present of the desperate struggle with which the nineteenth century opened in Europe, has both its value and interest, not only for the sons and grandsons of those who took part in it, but for all lovers of their country. Every page displays the well-read scholar and man of refined feelings and high character. No one can peruse without emotion the simple and unpretending account of the soldier-boy's first coming

under fire, a few weeks after joining his regiment, in the bloody engagement with the French among the sand dunes of Holland. The same coolness and courage carried him through every campaign, almost every battle of the war, from the Helder, Walcheren, and Corunna, to Torres Vedras, Bayonne, and Waterloo, all of which are more or less fully described in these pages.

My own part in this compilation as editor has been but small. My chief difficulty has been selection. I have introduced words of my own only when I feared the continuity of the narrative might be spoilt without a few connecting links. The history of the great war is so well written by historians, and so intimately known to every intelligent Englishman, and especially to every soldier, that little more than a few touches seem necessary to recall the whole subject to the reader, so as to obviate the necessity of refreshing the memory by taking down the history from the shelf.

I am indebted for these letters, and the excellent preservation in which I find them, to two loving women who took complete charge of them at the earlier and later part of the honoured writer's life. First to her to whom most of them were originally addressed, and who preserved, copied, and docketed them with all a sister's pride and love; and secondly to her to whom those old yellow bundles, well known and often talked about during forty-five years of wedded life, seemed the most sacred and precious of manuscripts, since they told how he had won his spurs in the years before they met. From her they have now passed to other hands, in which they are esteemed a sacred trust, and are valued for their own intrinsic merit. I hope and believe they will be similarly valued by the public.

F. C. Carr-Gomm.

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Pedigree of the Gomm Family.

WILLIAM GOMM, Lord of the Manor of Nethercote House, Lewknor, Oxon.; b. 1698, d. 1780; buried at Nethercote, the reversion of which he sold to Mr. Jodrell

Married first—DINAH, dau. of Richard Christie. She d. 1737.

He married, secondly, MARIANNE JAQUIN, widow of M. de Moivre (by whom she had one daughter, Ann, who survived her and d. 1814). The issue of this marriage was one daughter, Mary, who married Mr. Thomas Philpot; their only daughter, Marianne, married Sir John Edward Harington, grandfather of the present Sir Richard Harington

RICHARD GOMM, d. 1769. He had been twice married. By his first wife he left an only son, the Rev. William Gomm, for many years rector of Braundean, who d. 1831, aged 85. He had fifteen children. This branch of the family is now extinct

WILLIAM GOMM, b. 1728. Contractor under the Russian Government at Onega, White Sea. Sir James Harris (afterwards Lord Malmesbury) made him Secretary to the Embassy, first at St. Petersburg, then at the Hague; d. 1792, buried in Bath Abbey

Married 1752 at St. Petersburg

MARIE JEANNE, dau. of the Russian Councillor de Poggenpohl and his wife Marie de Barraud, of Normandy. She d. 1790, and is buried at Mon Repos, St. Petersburg. Her sister married Baron von Nicolai

JOHN GOMM, twice married, d. 1772, *s. p.*

Miss JANE GOMM, b. 1753, d. 1822; buried in Bath Abbey. Employed with her friend Miss M. C. Goldsworthy as governess to the Princesses, daughters of H.M. George III.

WILLIAM GOMM, b. at St. Petersburg 1754. Lieut.-Col. of the 55th Regt.; engaged throughout the war with French Republic in the West Indies; wounded at battle of St. Lucia; killed at the storming of Pointe à Petre, Island of Guadaloupe, 1794

Married 1783, in Barbadoes

MARY ALLEYNE, dau. of Joseph Maynard, Esq., of Barbadoes, and his wife Mary Alleyne Ball; d. and buried at Penzance, 1796, aged 34

RICHARD GOMM, Lieut. R.N., killed 1781, on board boat of H. M. S. *Burford*, off Mangalore, while attacking forces of Hyder Ali

JAMES GOMM, Lieut. R.N., b. 1762, married Frances, dau. of J. Wilder, Esq.; d. in Jersey, leaving issue

SOPHIA, b. 1760, d. 1837

1778 Married at St. Petersburg

CHARLES, COUNT DE BRÜHL, of the Holy Roman Empire, late a Lieut.-Gen. in the Prussian army; d. 1802

MARIE, b. 1779; married General von Clausewitz

FANNY, married General von Marwitz

FREDERICK WILLIAM, Count de Brühl, b. 1791, d. 1859. Married Comtesse Hedwig Gneisenau. Their issue is five daughters, the eldest of whom is the Comtesse Hedwig Brühl, lady in waiting to the Crown Princess of Prussia (Princess Royal of England)

WILLIAM MAYNARD GOMM, Field-Marshal, &c. &c.; b. in Barbadoes, 1784; d. 1875; buried at Rotherhithe

Married first,

SOPHIA, dau. of Granville Penn, Esq., of Stoke Park, Bucks. She d. 1827.

Married secondly, at Newbattle Abbey, in 1830, ELIZABETH ANN, eldest dau. of Lord Robert Kerr and his wife Mary, dau. of the Rev. Ed. Gilbert, and grand-dau. of the 5th Marquis of Lothian. She d. 1878, and is buried at Rotherhithe

HENRY GOMM, b. 1786. Lieut.-Col. of the 6th Regt.; d. in 1816 of wounds received at the battle of the Pyrenees; buried at Geneva

RICHARD GOMM, Ensign; b. 1787, d. 1801.

SOPHIA LOUISA GOMM, b. 1788, d. 1817; buried in Bath Abbey. She lived with her aunt Miss Gomm, and Miss Goldsworthy

LETTERS AND JOURNALS

OF

SIR WILLIAM MAYNARD GOMM.

CHAPTER I.

INTRODUCTORY.

THE LIFE of Sir William Gomm covered ninety years; his public and active life commenced at an age when most boys are leaving a private and entering a public school, and that life continued to be not only active but public for three quarters of a century.

It may be divided into four distinct periods, each of about twenty years:—

I. From 1799 to 1816, a purely *active military life* in the great war against France in Holland, Portugal, Spain, and Belgium; of which period I will speak more in detail hereafter.

II. From 1817 to 1839, *home military life*; when he advanced from the rank of lieutenant-colonel in the Coldstream Guards to that of major-general. It was during this period that he married—first, Sophia Penn, the granddaughter of William Penn, of Pennsylvania, who died in 1827; and, secondly, Elizabeth Kerr, the eldest daughter of Lord Robert Kerr, who, after forty-five years of wedded life, during which husband and wife were hardly for a day separated, survived him only two years. He had no issue by either of these marriages.

During this period he lost the protectors of his youth—viz. his cousin, the Rev. W. Gomm, of Bramdean, and his aunt, Miss Gomm, who had supplied to him the place of the parents that he had lost in infancy. Owing to the death of his brother and sister, he succeeded to all his aunt's property upon her death in 1822, and became lord of the Manor of Rotherhithe, inheriting a property which had come through the Goldsworthys, with whom the earlier part of his life was so intimately associated. During this period of his life he travelled in different parts of Europe, devoting a considerable portion of his spare time to literature.

III. From 1839 to 1856, *colonial administrative life.* From 1839 to 1842 he held the chief command and was Member of Council at Jamaica, during the Administration of Sir Charles Metcalfe. During the short time he filled that post, by his urgent representations to the Colonial Office he succeeded in establishing the mountain barrack of Newcastle; which, from the salubrity of its situation, led to a wonderful improvement in the health of the European troops. For nearly a quarter of a century a succession of British regiments enjoyed there an absolute immunity from yellow fever. Subsequently the charm seemed broken, and the troops at Newcastle became as liable to the scourge as if they had been dwelling in the plains; a calamity which was brought about solely by a cruel neglect of most obvious sanitary precautions. On his return in the spring of 1842 he was gazetted to the command of the Northern District; but in November of the same year he was appointed Governor and Commander-in-Chief in Mauritius, in the place of Sir Lionel Smith, Bart., which appointment he held till 1849. The seven years of his administration of the island were chiefly marked by great financial difficulties, caused by the utter destitution of the labour market and a most unsound system of banking. In dealing with these difficulties the Governor was well supported by the loyal co-operation of the servants of the Crown; but he was much opposed by the unofficial members of the Council. When he resigned office the verdict of the Lords of

the Treasury at home was, that 'he had deserved credit for his proceedings in carrying into effect the instructions he had received for disengaging the Mauritius Government from the transactions and responsibilities of the banks in which the Colonial Treasury and Funds had been implicated by his predecessors in the administration of the Government.' He proceeded from Mauritius to Calcutta, having received from the Horse Guards the intimation that her Majesty had been pleased to appoint him Commander-in-Chief in India. On arrival at Calcutta on June 2, he found that—owing to the panic at home, which resulted from the second Sikh War and the battles of Chillianwallah and Goojerat, and to the jealousy of the Court of Directors of the direct patronage by the Crown—his appointment from the Horse Guards had been superseded, and that Sir Charles Napier had just arrived in Calcutta before him as Commander-in-Chief, and had at once proceeded to the Punjab. Sir William found at Calcutta ample explanations from the Duke of Wellington and Lord Fitzroy Somerset.[1] His disappointment was heightened by

[1] Such a bitter disappointment can have rarely befallen any man. He left Mauritius with her Majesty's orders in his hands, appointing him to the highest military command out of England, and his journal on the long sea voyage shows with what delight he looked forward to such a congenial sphere. He had no idea of his supersession until the vessel was in the Hooghly. How he met the blow may be seen from a memorandum found in his handwriting, dated Calcutta, July 1849.

'Others may have had, and I doubt not had, better reasons than myself for regarding this matter chiefly in its private bearings, and as it affected themselves. I have the satisfaction of recording that from the first the public consideration was not only uppermost but paramount and all-controlling with me. I saw myself, the youngest Lieutenant-General in the army, advanced impromptu and most unexpectedly by myself—since two general officers, my seniors, and considerably so, were already holding stations in India—to the highest military trust which it is in the power of the sovereign to confer. But an emergency had suddenly arisen, or was believed to have arisen, in which if the services of distinguished military prowess already given proof of could be at once obtained, the ministry would be unpardonable, I thought, which should hesitate for a moment to apply them, to the quashing of all other dispositions on foot, and the more inexcusable in proportion to the magnitude of the successes already obtained through the exercise of such powers, and the firmness of hold thus fastened upon public opinion. Such an opportunity presented itself most prominently in the person of Sir Charles Napier, and India had been the very scene of his successes.

the serious illness of Lady Gomm, contracted, it was supposed, while nursing a sick friend. It was not till September that they were able to leave Calcutta; they remained for two months the guests of Lord and Lady Torrington, in Ceylon, and arrived in England in January 1850. In the following August he was appointed Commander-in-Chief of Bombay; but on the eve of starting was appointed to the chief command, owing to Sir Charles Napier suddenly resigning his command, in consequence of differences between himself and Lord Dalhousie. On December 6, he landed in Calcutta, and was sworn in as Member of Council and Commander-in-Chief. The five years of his military command in India were comparatively uneventful, a calm occurring between the Sikh War and the great Mutiny of 1857; and that calm was hardly ruffled by the distant storm which was raging during two of those years on the shores of the Baltic and Black Seas: a suggestive thought for us who have seen in our own day how even a

Could I have descended to the private consideration, even in the first moments of my acquaintance with my disappointment, I might have found consolation in the fact of my supersessor being considerably my senior in the army, and as such entitled to the preference *in limine*, although this would afford, of course, no adequate satisfaction for the cancelling, under ordinary circumstances, of my appointment once conferred. *Au reste*, it was notorious that Napier's quarrel with the Court of Directors had been the only bar to his appointment, in the ordinary course, in succession to Lord Gough, an obstruction which the panic of the hour at once swept away. (Signed) 'W. M. Gomm.'

Here, if anywhere, is a proof that the metal tried in this fire was gold. This was genuine loyalty, a rarer virtue than is sometimes thought. It was at one time asserted that it was the Duke himself who had sent out Napier. 'If you do not go, sir, *I* must,' was said to have been the sententious compliment by which the Prince of Waterloo overpersuaded the reluctant Napier to go. This now is acknowledged to be pure fiction. The Duke was not frightened by Chillianwallah; he himself publicly declared that he was frightened neither for India nor for India's heroic army, for its safety or its laurels; and that he never doubted the next intelligence would bring tidings of brilliant triumph and glorious success. The Duke of Wellington believed Sir William Gomm quite fit for the exigency, competent to deal with its complications and to terminate its crisis. Had he been left to himself he would not have superseded Sir William Gomm in the command to which he had been named, but he was overruled. *Æquam memento rebus in arduis servare mentem* is an old piece of advice, but it is few who can follow it. The Duke did when the news of Chillianwallah staggered England. Sir William Gomm did when the news of his supersession was his welcome to Calcutta.

threatened rupture with Russia will now throw our Indian borders into disorder. The cordial relations which existed between the civil and military authorities of that period were due as much to the wise kindheartedness of the Commander-in-Chief as to his intimate personal friendship with Lord Dalhousie. Commenting upon this in a review of his life, one of the leading London journals in 1875 wrote: 'Sir William Gomm's work was always thoroughly and smoothly done, and he had no enemies. The great proof of a person's real worth is to be found in the attachment of those brought into private intercourse with him. Now, all Sir William's associates, especially those who at various times constituted his military family, loved and respected him. In India, where he succeeded the eccentric, impetuous, and prejudiced genius, Sir Charles Napier—who held that every one who was not his partisan was either a fool or a knave, preferably the latter, and most probably both—Sir William was extremely popular, and his popularity was much promoted by his wife, who presided over society with much grace and perfect success. None save those who have been in India can realise the fact that the purity and refinement of Anglo-Indian society depend greatly on the qualities of the lady who is at the head of it. At Simla, especially, personal influence and example work wonders; and never was the society of the Capua of India in so healthy a state as when it was presided over by Lady Gomm. Her social, moral, and mental qualities admirably fitted her for the position which she assumed when her friend Lady Dalhousie, after a short stay in India, returned homewards, only to die on the passage; and many an old Indian looks back with affectionate recollection to the time when Lady Gomm was the centre and queen of the society in the beautiful British settlement in the Himalayas.'

IV. From 1856 to 1875. *Dignified and honoured old age.* During this period he resided either at his cottage in Bramdean, Hampshire, or at Brunswick Terrace, Brighton, or at his house at Spring Gardens, looking into St. James's Park.

In 1863 he succeeded Lord Clyde as Colonel of the Cold-

stream Guards, the regiment to which he had been transferred from the 9th half a century before for distinguished service through the Peninsular war. On January 1, 1868, he received his bâton as Field-Marshal, and on the death of Sir John Burgoyne in 1871 he was appointed Constable of the Tower. He quietly rested from his long and arduous services on March 15, 1875, in the ninety-first year of his age, after eighty years passed in the service of his country.

Of the public estimation in which he was held, no further comment would seem necessary than the above enumeration of the distinguished positions for which he was selected, and in all of which he achieved a success which, being quiet rather than brilliant, was the more concordant with his simple but manly character. One or two incidents, however, may here be added. In notifying to Sir William his appointment, with the sanction of her Majesty, as Constable of the Tower, Mr. Gladstone writes that 'his motive in making this proposal is to secure for a post of honour the name best qualified by service and distinction to adorn it.'

The following memorandum, in Lady Gomm's handwriting, is the record of a distinguished compliment paid to him on the occasion of the Emperor of Russia's visit in 1874 :—

'Sir Charles Ellice sat next me at dinner yesterday. I was pleased at the way he described to me the scene at the Duke of Cambridge's table last May, of which, oddly enough, I had not heard any account, except from Sir William and Prince Teck; although the Duke of Cambridge told me how gratifying it was to him that it had happened at his table. It seems there are never any speeches on these occasions. The Duke gave the Emperor of Russia's health standing. The Emperor gave the Queen's. He then stood up and proposed "The Peninsular hero present, the Field-Marshal." All seem to have been taken by surprise, no one more so than Sir William himself, who was seated between Prince Teck and Sir Charles Ellice. He did the right thing; in the most dignified and simple manner, he got up and bowed most gratefully to the Czar, and then to the Duke of Cambridge. Sir Charles

Ellice spoke of it quite with emotion, and considered that every one present felt gratified by the compliment to the oldest soldier in the army. The Emperor of Russia afterwards sent Sir William the Order of St. Vladimir, which, however, the rule of our service does not permit him to wear. He has the Order of St. Ann (also Russian), and Lord Derby offered to exchange, through the two Governments, the Vladimir for the highest order or class (Grand Cross) of St. Ann's, but Sir William said he would prefer to retain in its present form the St. Ann, which he received at Waterloo under peculiar circumstances, with a little band who are now no more, and to retain the Vladimir, though not permitted to wear it, as a personal compliment from the present Czar.'

Thus, having attained the highest honours possible in the army, esteemed and beloved by all who knew him, from the chief over whose military education he had been once selected to preside, to the private of the Coldstreams, who was glad to salute as his colonel the veteran whose breast was covered with medals of the battles most famous in his country's history, and from the monarch, whose privileged and trusted servant he had been throughout her long reign, to his humblest tenant at Rotherhithe, where his charities and good deeds were broadcast, he ended in perfect peace a life whose boyhood and early manhood had been passed in such Titanic war.

To quote again from the essayist mentioned above, who evidently knew him intimately: 'In appearance Sir William Gomm was short and slight, but though slight he was wiry, and preserved his bodily and mental activity almost to the last. When nearly ninety he worked as briskly as many men of threescore, while the clearness of his intellect seemed to be unaffected by the lapse of years. The chief sign of age was his deafness, which prevented him taking so active a part in conversation as both he and his friends would have liked. Sir William, though he never appeared before the public as an author, was from his earliest youth up fond of literature; wrote several pieces of poetry of more than average merit, and possessed a most cultivated and refined mind. His passion for

music was extreme, and he may indeed be described as a thoroughly accomplished English gentleman. In disposition he was genial, polished, and kindhearted, and his circle of friends comprised every one who had known the good old man. It would be an exaggeration to pretend that he was an eminent general, or that his abilities were of the highest class. In no one office that he held did he leave the mark of genius; but geniuses frequently do less good work than a conscientious modest man of experience, common-sense, good abilities, and diligence. Such a man was Sir William Gomm.'

His love of reading was great, and his note-books abound in abstracts and in criticisms on the books which he read. These books were generally the best, and were carefully studied; for instance, during the course of the summer of 1855, at Simla, he read Grote's 'History of Greece,' and his elaborate *résumé* and intelligent criticism of the whole show that it was made a real study. Nor were lighter books disregarded. His love of Homer was lifelong; the following note was found in his handwriting, dated 1871:—'Early in 1794, the undersigned, then ten years of age, was first down in the breakfast-room one morning, and spying his father's favourite volume of Pope's "Homer" high up on the mantelpiece above him, he drew a chair and climbing up reached it, and drank in for the first time the story of the death of Hector before interruption arrived, and never left his hold of the Iliad from that day to this, consigning over "Sandford and Merton," then just out, for the scrutiny of other tastes.' This love of Homer was all-pervading, and creeps out in his early letters from the battle-fields of Spain, and in his writings and diaries all through his life.

As stated above, his love of music was intense. His diaries are full of musical notes, and it was fortunate that the deafness, which alone marked the decay of his physical powers, did not, up to the last, affect his musical enjoyment. In his diary, at the end of 1855, when, after his five years' command in India, he was looking forward to what he called his 'Ticket of Leave,' he writes: 'Dear England, shall I again hear the

revel of thy woodlands? Alas! my poor ears are growing very unworthy of it all; but not of the harmonies and thunder-music of thy great Concert Halls; the temples of Handel and Mendelssohn; nor of the great choirs that might well call down the seraphim to listen.' His love of music was strong to the very end. A week or two before his death, his niece (now Mrs. Carr-Gomm) mentioned that she was going to hear the 'Messiah.' He at once brightened up at the name of the oratorio, sent for the book, sat up in bed, and, turning over its pages, hummed over with strong voice many of his favourite airs, and spoke with delight of the beauties of different passages. Many will recollect seeing at the Exeter Hall Sacred Harmonic réunions the handsome and happy face of the gallant veteran who for years was their constant attendant.

No notice of either Sir William or of Lady Gomm would be complete which did not mention their great love of animals. To their last days every anecdote of wonderful animal sagacity or instinct was eagerly treasured up. From his early years, when first a mounted officer in the Peninsular war, to his latest days, his attachment to his horses was heartfelt. With no ordinary love does he speak of his little 'Phantom,' who carried him like lightning over the field of Vittoria; of 'George,' who carried him at Quatrebras and Waterloo, and spent a green old age in Stoke Park, where he was buried with honour at the ripe age of thirty-two; and of all the horses which formed an integral part of his family wherever he was.

The following extract from his diary in 1856, when leaving India, speaks for itself. He is writing of the sorrow of saying farewell to all his old servants. 'And then our horses—oh! our horses; dear "Fatty," my favourite bearer of more than twelve years, and friend for more than fourteen, too old to risk his taking home, though hale and hearty, with much of the colt about him still, made over to General Johnstone, worthily bestowed in every sense; his title is to be raised in importance to that of "The Chief." Honest and showy little "Rosy," George Berkeley's present to Elizabeth on leaving India,

made over also into good hands. "Gholáb Sing," the prince of ponies, and Burmese "Woonghee" happily provided for too; but all how reluctantly parted from! And would we could close the catalogue of regretted ones here! Our four horses that we intended taking home, the three pet Arabs, "Simkin," "Pekin," and "Bedouin," and "Momus" (dear Momus!), were led down this morning to the Raj Ghat for passing on board the steam vessel that was to take us. Before we arrived some grievous mismanagement occurred. The Arabs passed each in turn over the too negligently provided causeway of loose planks extended between shore and boat, with their wonted docility. But not so our precious "Momus." The unsteady motion of the planks beneath him, the vibration, increased, perhaps, by his heavier weight, alarmed him; he hesitated in mid-passage, and would have turned back. His hind-quarters dropped instantly over the plank edge, and he was precipitated, disappearing for moments in the depth of water running along the low sand cliff bordering the river, his head presently raised by the Syce who kept hold of the halter, and the noble creature was hauled to land in sore amazement, incapable of standing, and too surely suffering though no outward wound was visible. Jones, our butler, galloped back to meet us as we were coming on elephants, and apprised us of what had happened. His announcement will long ring heavily in my ears; brief, and like that of Antilochus in import. On my arrival there lay outstretched broadside, along the strand of the Chenab—"Like the tall bark whose lofty prow shall never stem the billows more"—the ruined frame of one of the noblest horses that ever trod the soil of India or any other. Hopes were tried to be entertained for a time of eventual revival; the eye was still bright as when careering in his pride, and the pulse healthy, but the spasmodic tremor of the limbs betrayed too surely to the practised eye how all was faring with him—and with me. The spine had been irremediably ruptured by the fall; he could never rise again; and although we still hoped that there was no acute pain (though there was, indeed, so much of heroic in his nature that he may very possibly have been suffering in-

tensely while "looking tranquillity," and responding by his sidelong gaze to all the terms of endearment I was lavishing upon him), the symptoms of fatal injury became gradually more palpable. Too well convinced of this, I made preparations for departure, leaving it to our good friend Mr. Allgood to see the stern necessity properly carried into effect, anticipating a lingering suffering, by some worthy hands of the Irregular Cavalry. And may few part with as heavy hearts from this shore through coming time as we have borne away with us this day.

'Of the twelve years of our Mauritian and Indian lives, and the brief period intervening, that horse has been a principal delight. Wherever I presented myself, "Grey Momus," the pride of every field, sure victor in the race on the "Champ de Mars" of Port Louis, and where he was not "crying Ha! ha! among the trumpets," looking it to the life wherever there have been musterings of troops and rustlings of arms for my inspections throughout India. Even fuller of years, perhaps, than his worthy compeer "Fatty"—both having accompanied us from the Cape in 1842—he also bore them, like the oak of ages bears his leaves, greenly still; and while at a loss to find hands into which I might safely confide him, if left behind, I trusted that he might be spared to me for years of further enjoyment of vigorous life, the "observed of all observers" at home: *sed dîs aliter visum.*

'I have since received assurance that all was most humanely carried through. Intense suffering was coming on shortly after I left him; but the sun went down upon the calm repose and deep-delved and well-protected grave of a hero. For of such material was not the noble creature's nature full?'

While speaking of their love of animals, no one who remembers Sir William and Lady Gomm during the years 1840 to 1851 would willingly pass unnoticed the splendid mastiff, Coonah, who during those twelve years was by sea and land their constant companion. Lady Gomm writes about him: 'Coonah was given to me when a puppy in Jamaica in 1840. He was, I believe, a Cuban mastiff; a fine dark brindle colour,

with white breast and forepaws. He stood about thirty inches high, broad chest, with the appearance of great strength and power. His heavy silver collar measures seven inches in diameter; his face was full of intelligence, and I named him on the spot after the range of mountains where he was born. It is natural to suppose that a dog, living so much in the society of human creatures, would become attached and domestic; but Coonah seemed from the first to know that he had been given to me for my special solace and amusement. At first, considering him too large for a *lapdog*, I merely used to have him for my out-of-door companion, and he slept in the stables; but I gave him his food myself every day. The first instance I remember of his particular attachment to myself was, when he was still a very young dog, on the occasion of Sir William being suddenly called on military business from the mountain cottage where we lived to town, and my remaining alone at Prospect. Our servants (even my own maid) slept in neighbouring huts, and the Staff had accompanied Sir William; probably, therefore, I sat on the terrace rather later than usual with Coonah. At all events, at bedtime he refused to leave me; and the more I told him to go and the servant called him, the more he crouched at my feet, looking up into my face most imploringly. The result was that when the servants left me and shut up the house, I turned the key on myself and Coonah as sole occupants; and I thought the dog seemed to know the comfort he would be to me in my novel situation. From this time to the end of our stay in Jamaica he slept at the door of our room. His *bound* of delight at seeing me after every separation, however slight, was once very nearly the cause of serious accident to him. It was on the beach near the Hôtel Pharoux at Rio, in early morning. I went out, and desired the servant to unfasten him and let him follow me. The dog when loosed, seeing me at some distance, made straight for me, and with such force leapt upon me that it nearly threw me down. This being observed by the boatmen, they rushed up with oars, paddles, and boathooks to destroy him; and I had some difficulty, by

clasping him round the neck, to show that we were friends—not strangers to each other. This probably saved his life. . . . On our two voyages to India Coonah was our companion, and always accompanied us on our Indian journeys. He travelled either in a palkee-gharri or marched with the horses. I had a dhooly for him on the Hills and two bearers, of which mode of conveyance he highly approved. But he did not long survive our second journey to India, nor did he die of old age. Poor Coonah was taken ill at Barnes Court, Simla, on Saturday, May 10, 1851; one day of severe illness, when hot baths and everything that could be thought of were tried to give him ease, but without effect. He died the same evening; and Sir William buried him in the garden, under a sweetbriar, the next morning. From that day we called the place Coonah's Terrace. For twelve years he had been my faithful and affectionate companion.'

It may seem to some trivial in so slight a sketch of a long-continued and eventful life to dwell so long upon horses and dogs; but such anecdotes are really more indicative of the character than many more weighty matters would be, and both with husband and wife love of and kindness to all animals was almost a religious feeling. Nothing more quickly roused the anger of this man, whose youth had been spent among the most terrible scenes of bloodshed, than to see the slightest cruelty to any animal; for the suffering of dumb creatures he had more than a woman's tenderness. His was the true love of animals which not merely extending to a few favoured pets, resents all unnecessary severity to the animals which are especially the servants of man, and does not take delight in the needless death of any.

Sir William kept a regular diary during the latter half of his life, and an irregular one the greater part of it. At the more interesting part of his life—as while he was in Jamaica and India—and whenever he travelled on the Continent, the diary expanded into a full narrative; whereas in *flatter* times it fell off into an occasional note or memorandum, entered at varying intervals. He wrote much in verse, and on many

important public questions corresponded with those who had made such subjects their specialty. He wrote valuable comments on many books, and maintained interesting correspondence with many authors and poets. He carefully preserved all papers which he thought of special interest, and of much of his official correspondence he kept a private copy. From the above it may readily be inferred, considering the length of his life and the number of important offices which he held, that his papers are exceedingly voluminous.

The present papers consist almost entirely of—(1st) Notes of his family and early recollections, put together by Sir William himself; and (2ndly) letters written to his sister and aunt, principally the former, during his absence on the different campaigns. They extend from 1799—he was born in 1784—to 1816. During this period he was employed first under the command of the Duke of York and Sir Ralph Abercromby, in the unprofitable campaign to the Helder against the French under General Vandamme. Next his regiment went in 1800 on a somewhat purposeless cruise along the Portuguese coast, and then to Gibraltar and Lisbon; but there was not much fighting to be done, and the regiment came home at the end of the year, being nearly lost at sea.

In the following year (1801) he was aide-de-camp to the General commanding the Northern Division; and in 1803 he got his captaincy, at the age of eighteen, and did duty with his regiment in Ireland. In 1805 he studied at the Royal Military College at High Wycombe, where he was under the instruction of Sir Howard Douglas, who from that time was his attached friend. In 1806 he again joined his regiment, when it went over to Hanover in another somewhat futile expedition; and in the following year (1807) was employed under Lord Cathcart in an exploit which reflects no credit upon our country's arms or honour—viz. the destruction of Copenhagen. He was then upon the Quartermaster-General's Staff, on which, with some interruptions, he remained until the termination of the Waterloo campaign. In 1808 he went with Sir A. Wellesley to Portugal, and was engaged in the

battles of Roliça and Vimiera. In October, 1808, he advanced with Sir John Moore into Spain, and with him made his masterly but disastrous retreat to Corunna. He was almost the last man of the force to embark, and having done so was nearly lost on his way to England. His ill-fortune seemed still to continue, for in the summer of 1809 we find him told off to accompany the melancholy Walcheren expedition under the great Minister's brother. Here he contracted in the trenches of Flushing a malarious fever, of which he could not shake himself clear for four years; but, considering the number of men left behind in those dismal swamps, he may be reckoned fortunate to have come away even though in evil plight. Here the tide of his fortunes may be said to have turned, for in these first ten years his most glorious achievement was sharing in an arduous retreat under the illustrious Moore; while the only success of our arms was at Copenhagen, and was the most inglorious act of his long career.

The next year (1810) he was again with the army in Spain, having through his absence at Walcheren missed sharing the glories of Talavera—almost the only great Peninsular battle at which he was not present. From that day forward till the close of the great war he found himself under his former chief, and his friend for the next forty years, the great Duke; and though opposed to the mightiest of those famous military leaders—Massena, Ney, Marmont, Soult, and finally Napoleon himself—he was thenceforward on the winning side, unless we should except the unsuccessful siege of Burgos, and the disastrous though well-managed retreat therefrom. His battle-roll thenceforward is an epitome of the Peninsular war.

He was in the rapid advance to and battle of Busaco, followed by the quick but orderly retreat over the Mondego, through Coimbra, Leyria, and Santarem, drawing Massena on till he found himself confronted by the impassable and hitherto unsuspected lines of Torres Vedras, behind which from the heights of Sobral the English—in comparative comfort during the winter months—watched Massena and the French

becoming gradually reduced, till they in their turn had to retreat in the spring from point to point, fighting continually till they were completely routed at Fuentes d'Onor. He bore his part in the terrible sieges of Ciudad Rodrigo and Badajoz, and in the battle of Salamanca, for his conduct in which battle the Duke specially recommended him for promotion, and he became a lieutenant-colonel before he was twenty-eight years of age. Thence followed the bright advance into the capital of Spain, driving Joseph from his ill-fitting throne; and the march through Valladolid to Burgos, where for once Wellington had to own himself foiled after many brave assaults, and the siege had to be raised, while another odious retreat had to be conducted and the army placed in safety on the other side of the Agueda. Perhaps this was one of the most arduous and trying manœuvres in which Gomm ever bore a part. It was a retreat after a failure, in the face of an overpowering foe led by a general more skilful than he who allowed himself to be defeated at Salamanca (for Soult never allowed his hand to be forced like Marmont); the army was disorganised and almost mutinous, and throughout disheartened; the weather was most unfavourable; the Ministry very tardy in their support; while the newspapers and the public at home were then, as ever, loud in their denunciation of those who are not ostensibly and continuously successful, and utterly inappreciative of able generalship under difficulties. It was in these circumstances that Gomm most truly appreciated the force of his leader's character. This is fully seen in his letter of November 22, 1812, written ere the sad march was concluded. That young Gomm's letters were not the usual military comments of the day is most noticeable if reference be made to the English journals of that time, and notice be taken of the carping ignorance with which the conduct of Wellington was therein condemned upon the authority of officers who were indeed with the army, but to whom the complicated and skilfully prudent movements of the General were quite unintelligible. It is easy to be wise after the event, and nothing is more remarkable in these letters than the correctness of

Gomm's judgment of the great deeds which were enacted before him. During the winter, while the army rested in North Portugal, Gomm's time was busily employed in surveying the roads and passes over the Douro and through Tras-os-Montes: in the spring the knowledge thus acquired was able to be turned to good effect, and it was owing to this knowledge that—much to the astonishment of Jourdain—Graham's wing of the army at the battle of Vittoria had the support of artillery. Then followed the long siege of San Sebastian, and the driving of the French out of Spain—a feat the accomplishment of which the home-croakers had all along declared to be beyond the power of our general and our army. Our passage of the French frontier was warmly opposed; and almost daily battles were fought on the banks of the Bidassoa, the Nivelle, the Nive, and the Adour, where Gomm says that he had never been exposed to so many risks as during those few days.

In 1814, while investing Bayonne, he was encamped at Biarritz, a village then so insignificant as not to be marked in the maps, and there was received in April the news of the restoration of the Bourbons and Napoleon's retreat into Elba. Peace being restored, he travelled through France, and reached home in the autumn. He then reaped the reward of his good service, being transferred to the Coldstream Guards and made a K.C.B.

The following year (1815) saw him once more beside his old chief, once more in his old Staff appointment, as the Quartermaster-General of Picton's division (the Fighting Fifth), and once more opposed to the French—this time under the great commander himself. Both at Quatre Bras and Waterloo he was, as he says, 'in the hottest of all this glorious business.' Then he followed up the French to Paris itself, where he saw the King's return.

It will thus be seen that in all the great events of that great time he bore his part—a part quite as great as was conceivable for a man of his age, if not born in the purple. Through all these murderous battles he had seemed, as he says, to bear a charmed life; it may almost be said that he escaped

unhurt through them all, for the slight wound he received in the leg at the Nivelle was not enough to incapacitate him for work, and the touch he had at Bergen, when only fourteen years of age, was to his sorrow only a scratch, and too rapidly imperceptible. In fact, he personally suffered less in a score of hard and bloody and long-contested battles than many a lad does in a single football match. It is, of course, impossible to say how many hairbreadth escapes he had, many of them, curiously enough, from drowning, both in sea and in flood. He frequently had to lament that the beloved horses which he was riding did not escape equally well with himself. At Busaco, at Vittoria, at the Nive, and at Quatre Bras, his horses were shot under him. The narrowness of his own escape at Vittoria was little short of miraculous.

His brother Henry, of whom so frequent mention is made in these letters, was only eighteen months his junior. He does not seem to have shared either his brother's good luck or brightness of temper; nor, to judge from his letters, was he a man of the same rare culture as William Gomm. He was in the 6th Regiment and was wounded in the battle of the Pyrenees on July 24, 1813. The wound was not at first considered dangerous, but it refused to close, and his health was soon undermined, although he returned to England and received all the care that a tender sister's nursing could supply. In the hopes of restoring him to health, Sir William Gomm, after the conclusion of the war, and as soon as he could get leave, took him abroad in 1816, intending to let him have the benefit of the winter in Northern Italy. They only got, however, as far as near Geneva, when Henry Gomm suddenly grew worse, and died in a wayside inn. His brother, terribly broken-hearted, buried him in the cemetery at Geneva, and returned alone.

In the following year (1817) a still greater trial awaited him: his only sister Sophia, to whom nearly all the following letters are addressed, faded away, and before the close of the year left him to mourn his sadly desolate condition. Something may be known of the love between this brother and

sister from the letters; but to the close of his life, though he survived her by nearly sixty years, he could hardly speak of her without his eyes filling with tears. The tone of his letters, the care with which he preserved to his old age her latest letters to him as some of his most valued treasures, the way in which he always spoke of her as he looked at her miniature, showed the singular love which he bore to her; and it is through her appreciation of him, and the careful way that she preserved and arranged, and partly copied out, all his letters to her, now three-quarters of a century ago, that we are to-day enabled to read this simple, manly narrative of the events of those days, written at the time with all the personality and brightness of the actor, and yet with all the reverence due to her gentler nature, avoiding both the indelicate and self-conceited detail of 'our own special'—that hideous emanation of our day—and the cold balancing of the historian who writes, years after, of past events when all the freshness has faded out of them.

One or two things are chiefly noteworthy as we read these letters; one is, how excellently just a view the writer took of the affairs which were unfolding themselves before him, although he was an actor, and they were affairs 'big with destinies of realms,' and it is not always easy even with our modern appliances of telegrams and summaries rightly to estimate the significance of our present position. Another point is, how singularly modest the writer was; he was but a youth, writing to a sister who worshipped him; he was an actor in all the great doings of the time, yet not even in the earliest letters is there the faintest word of 'brag' or 'tall writing'; he writes of what he saw, rarely of what he did. As an instance of this, I may mention that, speaking to me of these early letters, an officer who has himself borne high command said, 'Do you find any notice of those two guns Gomm brought up at a critical point in one of the early Peninsular battles?' On my telling him I found no mention of the circumstance, he said, 'That is singular, for I always heard that that was what first brought him to the Duke's notice, and the Duke was so pleased

with him for this that he never lost sight of him from that day.' He had genuine loyalty in his disposition, and it is apparent in all his correspondence—a loyalty which means not a mere acknowledgment of and attachment to the sovereign, for this is the natural inheritance of every respectable member of the community, but in its higher and fuller sense a constant and faithful disposition to uphold constituted authority. Disloyalty was not unknown among our officers in the Peninsular war, who questioned and set at nought in estimation, if not in practice, all the plans of their leaders; and such disloyalty spreads now, like a noxious weed, through every rank and every profession in our country. In schools and in the church, among country yokels, and even in the Houses of Parliament, as well as in the services, authority is now contemned, and has difficulty to uphold its very existence.[1] From the time when Gomm was a subaltern in camp he was always prompt to render a willing and cheerful obedience to the powers that be, and was always truly and faithfully loyal. Further, note what a cultivated mind he had, so full of classical allusions, so appreciative of the highest forms of architecture and music and poetry, so well-informed on all points, so good a linguist—and yet his schooling was in days we are apt to consider the dark ages of education, and he left school before he was fifteen years old, and was from that day in camp and on duty. It is true, and this perhaps is the secret, that though an orphan, he was lovingly and tenderly brought up; he never lost any opportunity, whether in home cantonment or on foreign and active service, of trying to improve himself; he read the best books, and made careful criticisms on them; he associated with and always seems to have been a favourite in the best society, wherever he was. Add to this that he was a singularly pure-minded and religious man, and we have a picture of what from his earliest days, as far as we can judge from his writings, Sir William Gomm

[1] Disloyal persons were thus described many centuries ago by a sacred writer: 'They despise government; presumptuous are they, self-willed; they are not afraid to speak evil of dignities.'

seems to have been, and of what we certainly know him to have been in later years—a perfect English gentleman.

And it was to an officer's feeling as a gentleman first, and as a soldier afterwards, that Sir William Gomm, when he himself came to power, used always to appeal whenever he had to reprimand; and this is in entire accordance with the anecdote told of the Duke of Wellington at page 373. We have a good specimen of this style of dealing on an occasion when, as Commander-in-Chief in India, he had to prohibit the practice of anonymous newspaper correspondence. The following is from a circular letter addressed to commanding officers from the Adjutant-General's Office in Simla, 1853:—

'The Commander-in-Chief in India noticed some time ago in the "Lahore Chronicle" a very unbecoming anonymous letter, apparently emanating from a Queen's regiment, and full of murmurs at the prospect of a move.

'2. Distressed as his Excellency was to suppose that any officer of that corps could so far have forgotten what is due to his service, his regiment, and himself, as to have written this letter, the Commander-in-Chief abstained from inquiry; but a few weeks later another letter appeared in the "Delhi Gazette," written in the name of another regiment, and also anonymous. This second letter was still more improper and unsoldierlike than the first, and personally insulting to the Commander-in-Chief.

'3. His Excellency, not as General Sir William Gomm, but as Commander-in-Chief in India, responsible for the discipline and character of her Majesty's service in this country, felt that he could no longer be passive, and directed inquiry to be made.

'4. The result is that a captain in the service, with becoming contrition, at once confessed himself to be the author of the letter.

'5. In consequence of this candid and prompt avowal, the Commander-in-Chief has overlooked the particular offence, but his Excellency feels it his duty to put the officers of the Queen's service upon their guard.

'6. From the unmilitary practice of anonymous writing in the newspapers, and the still more blamable practice of anonymous complaints, her Majesty's service has hitherto been supposed to be free.

'7. It is hardly necessary to dwell upon the pernicious example which an officer who is inconsiderately drawn into a compliance with such practices thus sets to his own subordinates. No reflecting member of the profession can deny that such example tends to sap the foundation of all discipline.

'8. You are requested, therefore, to read this communication to the assembled officers of the regiment under your command, and repeat to them an aphorism of the great Duke of Wellington, which was quoted by Sir William Gomm as his only reprimand to the author of the second letter herein mentioned:—

'"To write an anonymous letter is the meanest action of which any man can be guilty."'

CHAPTER II.

1794–1799.

PARENTAGE—FIRST COMMISSION—WOOLWICH — JOINS 9TH REGIMENT—EXPEDITION TO THE HELDER—BATTLE OF BERGEN.

FROM a manuscript memoir of his family drawn out by Sir William Gomm in 1834, it appears that the Gomms were an Oxfordshire family, and that his great-grandfather, William Gomm, who died at Nethercote in 1780, had considerable estates there. His second son (Sir William's grandfather), William, resided in Russia, marrying a Russian lady of good family; he embarked in very large commercial enterprises, constructing the port of Onega in the White Sea, and opening an extensive commerce and navigation in a previously obscure and unproductive corner of the Russian empire. The contracts made by the Czar Peter were, however, perfidiously broken by his successor, and Mr. Gomm's enterprise was ruined. He was then appointed secretary to the embassy, first at the court of St. Petersburg, and then at the Hague, by his friend Sir James Harris, afterwards Lord Malmesbury.

His eldest son, William (Sir William Gomm's father), entered the army, and served with distinction through the American and West Indian wars from 1776 to 1794. While in the West Indies, he married, in 1782, Mary Alleyne Maynard, whose family resided in Barbadoes and had large estates there. He was an officer of great merit and distinction, and was frequently mentioned in the despatches of the time. He was wounded at the battle of St. Lucie in 1779, and the following interesting mention of the circumstance is found among his son's papers:—

'I remember, while aide-de-camp at Liverpool to one of my father's truest and worthiest friends, General Benson, in the year 1801, entering the reading-room of the Athenæum, and carelessly taking up a volume of the *Gentleman's Magazine* of the year 1793, and running my eye for a few moments over its pages without any definite object, my attention being on a sudden fixed by the following anecdote. It will be found at page 880 of that year:—

'"... While I extol the bravery of the Guards, let the Line have the merit due to them, which, at least, I will say nothing can exceed. As a single instance I must just mention a spirited reply of an officer, in the West Indies last war, to Sir William Medows. Captain G——, of the 55th Regiment, being wounded in the eye at the taking of St. Lucia, Sir William, passing by in the heat of action, just stopped to regret his misfortune. 'Do not mind me, sir,' says he. 'I have one eye left, with which I hope to see you beat the French army.' Such a speech, made by one in excruciating pain, deserves to be recorded."

'The blank following the initial to the name I was happily at no loss to fill up, and busied myself, *con amore*, in copying off the passage. The pleasurable feeling of a youth of sixteen, excited by accidentally stumbling upon such a memento, will be easily understood.'

The esteem in which he was held by his superiors may be appreciated from the following letter from Sir Charles Grey to Lord Amherst:—

Sir Charles Grey to Lord Amherst.

'Fort Bourbon: March 25, 1794.

'SIR,—I have another recommendation to offer, to which I solicit your Lordship's attention most earnestly, being the particular situation of Major William Gomm, of the 55th Regiment, who was put in orders at Barbadoes by the Honourable Major-General Bruce on June 20, 1793, as lieutenant-colonel commandant of a corps of French emigrants, and did duty as such, but has never been confirmed at home.

'I can assure your lordship that he is an officer of infinite merit, being also deputy-adjutant-general to the forces in the West Indies, and six years in the rank of major. At the time of my embarking on this expedition, I found the situation in which I was to leave Barbadoes required an officer of great experience, activity, and ability, as well as of local knowledge of this service; and knowing Major Gomm to answer this description, I appointed him to the command at Barbadoes, although he wished to have come on this expedition, in which difficult situation he has acquitted himself most admirably, and fully answered my expectation, having had near 1,200 sick, with all the women and children, under his management, besides the care of forwarding the recovered men, all kinds of stores, etc., to the army. I then promised him that I would represent his claims and merit to your lordship, for his Majesty's consideration, to obtain for him the brevet rank of lieutenant-colonel from June 20, 1793, when he was promoted by the Honourable Major-General Bruce; and it will be a high gratification to me if his Majesty should be pleased to confer the favour of lieutenant-colonel's rank on him from the date above-mentioned. (Signed) 'CH. GREY.'

He was lieutenant-colonel in the 55th Regiment, when he was killed while still serving under Sir Charles Grey at the storming of Point-à-Petre in the island of Guadeloupe on July 2, 1794. At the time of his death his wife and four children were in England, and Sir William Gomm records that it is stated in his father's last letter that:—

'Through Sir Charles Grey's regard for him, and under a lively sense of obligation—personal obligation to him, he, unsolicited, availed himself of his privilege of presenting my father with an ensign's commission for myself. Through Colonel Fisher's zealous intervention, although not improbably in equal measure from his own kind impulse, he appointed Henry to an ensigncy in the 6th Regiment shortly after my father's demise.

'But these appointments, to be confirmed, needed a higher

sanction from home, and not only their confirmation was needed, but a steady protection from the highest quarter from assaults not unreasonably urged from time to time against the retainers of appointments, the active duties of which they were incapacitated as yet, through extreme youth, from fulfilling. Indeed, we both engaged in these as early as most youths have done, similarly circumstanced; but, as I have already said, our position in the interim required a warm and earnest protection; and we found it all in the full heart and paternal consideration of the good Duke of York; and not only so, but in grateful memory of our father's services, he scrupled not to confer a like mark of favour upon little Richard several years before he died.'

The military careers of the three little brother ensigns, so uniformly begun, were eventually as diverse as is possible. Richard died in 1801, aged fourteen years, almost before he could have begun to learn his drill. Henry rose in the 6th Regiment, and served in Canada and through the greater part of the Peninsular campaign with his regiment; in July 1813 he had for a time temporary command of his regiment in the Pyrenees, and, as his brother's diary says, 'he proved his title to it in every way. I received many letters from his friends when I was before Sebastian, informing me of all that had taken place; all giving me the best consolation a soldier ought, perhaps, to require on such an occasion. He was wounded, and fell at the head of his regiment encouraging his men.'

That division of the army under Sir Rowland Hill, being hard pressed by the French, were retreating, and Henry Gomm insisted on being brought away with the retreating army, although General Hill had left with him a recommendation to the French general as honourable to himself as to Henry Gomm. In spite of his wounds, as soon as he heard the army was about again to advance, he left Bilbao and rejoined his regiment, although the weather was then most inclement in the Pyrenees; but his exhausted condition did not permit him to remain there long, and he was compelled to

forego the chances of distinction and promotion which then appeared just within his reach. For three long years he remained alive in great suffering and in enfeebled health, latterly travelling in the south of Europe, accompanied by his brother William. At last, on their way to Geneva, he died at Pont de Beauvoisin, on December 5, 1816, aged thirty. His brother removed the body to Geneva, and buried him in the cemetery of Plein Palais, where a marble monument still marks the spot.

William was the eldest of the three brothers, and his name remained on the Army List till 1875. What a singular contrast to the fate of his two brother ensigns, one of whom did not live beyond boyhood, the other who died in his early manhood! — whereas William attained every distinction that the army had to offer, occupying the highest commands, and died full of age and honour, in full possession of all his faculties to the last—eighty-one years after he had, with his little brothers, received his first commission in the army.

Some of the newspapers which, on his installation as Constable of the Tower of London in 1872, gave a brief summary of his career, were quite incredulous when recording from the Army List the date of his commission, and Sir William himself wrote in the margin that it was accounted for by the incidents narrated in the despatch of Sir Charles Grey from Berville Camp recording the death of his father Colonel Gomm at the battle of Point-à-Petre, in consequence of which a benign Government had given commissions to the three orphaned sons of an officer of high rank who fell in battle.

After their mother's death in 1796 the children were under the care of their father's sister, Miss Jane Gomm. This lady, and her most intimate friend, Miss Martha Caroline Goldsworthy, the sister of General Goldsworthy, aide-de-camp to His Majesty George III., were associated as sub-governesses to the princesses the daughters of George III. and Queen Charlotte. The care and education of the three younger children, viz. the Princesses Mary, Sophia, and Amelia, fell almost entirely to the lot of Miss Gomm, who, until her

death in 1822, retained the affection and esteem, not of her pupils only, but of all the Royal Family. After the death of her sister-in-law, Mrs. William Gomm, in 1796, she assumed the charge of the orphan children, and filled for them a mother's part. She was a lady of exalted piety, and possessed a powerful mind, richly stored with sound learning.

It is doubtless to her estimable training that William Gomm owed that good education and genuine piety which were so marked in the boy officer, whose schooling lasted only till his fifteenth year.

The kindly feeling exhibited by the Royal Family to Miss Gomm and her nephews is shown by the fact that William Gomm received his first sword from the hands of H.R.H. the Princess Mary, while many pieces of plate, still retained in the family, were gifts to Miss Gomm from different members of the Royal Family.

William Maynard Gomm, then not quite ten years of age, was in 1794 gazetted ensign in the 9th Regiment, and in 1795 a lieutenant; he, however, remained at Woolwich prosecuting his studies for some years, but in the summer of 1799 the British Ministry came to a resolution to send an army into Holland, in order to drive out the French and to overturn the Republican Government which the French had set up, and to bring the country once more under the dominion of the House of Orange. An arrangement for this purpose was made with the Emperor Paul I. of Russia, who, in consideration of a large subsidy from England, furnished some 18,000 men, while the English were to supply a contingent about half that number, and to support the combined forces with their fleet. The 9th was one of the regiments selected to go, and William Gomm, who heard of this while working in the Military Academy, became most anxious that the leave which enabled him to be absent from the regiment and to attend the Academy should not, as his friends proposed, be extended, but that he should be allowed to go with his regiment on service. His letter to his aunt, Miss Gomm, on the subject is full of youthful enthusiasm.

To Miss Gomm, Queen's Lodge, Windsor.

'Woolwich: July 8, 1799.

'DEAR AUNT,—I have heard that the 9th Regiment is ordered to go upon the expedition, and is now at Southampton. I am very much afraid Colonel Fisher[1] will find means to get me further leave of absence, therefore I cannot help troubling you with another letter to beg you when you write to him to say that he will make me the happiest being alive by letting me go with it. If he does not grant me this request, I assure you it will quite dishearten me, and render me totally indifferent whether I join it soon or late. I know your kindness, and am afraid you are averse to my going; but if my happiness is in the least to be regarded, pray gratify me in this one desire, and I shall look upon it as the greatest kindness you can do me. I shall never have the least inclination to go on with my studies here, not through obstinacy (for I hope I shall never be so ungrateful as to forget that my friends' kindness is the sole motive of their endeavouring to get me leave of absence), but through disappointment; for I have fixed my mind upon joining my regiment when this last leave is expired, and I am still more desirous now of going as the regiment is appointed for the expedition: not that I think I shall be of any service, for that is out of the question; but that I may learn to be of service, if possible, some future day. But if my friends insist upon my remaining at Woolwich, and succeed in endeavouring to get me further leave, I shall of course be obliged to comply. I shall thank them sincerely for their attention to me, but I shall be unhappy. The 55th Regiment[2] is also going on the expedition. I was very agreeably surprised yesterday by a visit from Mr. Philpot. He took me out to dinner with him. I told him that the 9th was ordered on the expedition, and that I intended writing to you.

[1] In his mother's will Colonel Fisher is named as one of the executors and guardians of the children, with Miss Jane Gomm and the Rev. William Gomm.

[2] This was his father's old regiment. It, however, did not go on this occasion to Holland.

He begged me to let him know how it was to be settled as soon as I could. I suppose you know that my aunt and Miss Philpot are at Southampton. I beg you will excuse me sending you this second letter, but I am quite upon the fidgets to know whether you and Colonel Fisher and some other good folks will be so merciful as to grant my request. I hope you and Sophia continue in good health. Pray let me know as soon as you can whether you are merciful. With love to Sophia, I remain, dear Aunt,

'Your dutiful and affectionate Nephew,
(Signed) 'W. M. GOMM.

'If Colonel Fisher asks whether I am willing to join my regiment now, as he did in April, pray tell him I shall be unhappy if I do not.'

'Woolwich: July 26, 1799.

'DEAR AUNT,—Words are too weak to express the happiness which your letter has given me. A sudden dread struck me when I received it. I knew it was either to make me happy or wretched; but when I read Colonel Fisher's determination I was something more than happy. I shall have a still greater regard for him, and all my friends if possible, than I had before for this last kindness to me. You have been the chief instrument in it, and I shall remember it as long as I live. Colonel Benson came to Woolwich last Sunday. He called upon me, but unluckily I was not at home. He wrote on Monday to one of the officers whom he saw the day before, and desired him to tell me that he had heard from you; that you had been so kind as to inform him of my desire for joining my regiment, and that he would endeavour to have my wishes gratified.

'I heard this morning from my uncle. He goes into Wales on Thursday next, and wishes to see me on Monday in Kennington Road (where, I suppose, you know he is) if convenient. My masters have given me permission, provided I return as soon as I can, as I have so short a time to stay. I shall have an opportunity of calling upon Colonel Benson. I feel extremely obliged to all who are so kind as to be in-

terested about me, but I cannot help hoping my regiment may go abroad. It certainly will if there is no further alteration, as it is among the list of those who are to go; and it is to be completed with militia. I am very well aware of the fatigues and dangers which are likely to occur; but believe me, when I assure you that my attachment to the service shall enable me to surmount the former, great as they may be, and my duty to my king and country shall never let me shrink from the latter. I am rewarded by being in the service, and surely the utmost in my power is not too much. If I am to return, I shall enjoy the comfortable reflection "that I have done my duty"; if I fall, I shall at least fall gloriously—which always has been and always will be the summit of my desires.

'But think not that whilst I strive to discharge my military duties I shall forget my religious ones. I have always thought that he who observes the former and disregards the latter is at best but a civilised brute. He who wishes to be styled "a great man" must, in my opinion, look upon his religion as the foundation of his greatness. Courage, humanity, clemency, and all other virtues that constitute the "hero" will necessarily follow. The character of Rolla in "Pizarro" (which I suppose you have read) is that which I should choose to follow. I can never enough admire it. I have troubled you with a great number of letters lately, but I believe I need not beg you to excuse me. Now that you have made me happy I shall not be so troublesome. Every day till I join my regiment will appear to me almost a week. I hope you and Sophia are both quite well. Pray give my love to Sophia, and tell her I thank her very much for her wishing me to stay at home, but I must be a soldier as well as a brother. It is now time for me to conclude, with assuring you that I remain, dear Aunt,

'Your dutiful and affectionate Nephew,

'WM. GOMM.'[1]

[1] All letters which are not entered as being written to others, are addressed to his sister Sophia.

Sir William Gomm's attachment to the 9th Regiment continued to the end of his life. In 1872, when his old friend and former aide-de-camp, Sir Henry Bates, was given the regiment, he received the following note[1]:—

'My much-esteemed and regarded successor to the colonelcy of the corps which called itself, and with universal acclaim from without, in my juvenile days "The Old Ninth," pray accept the united congratulations of Lady Gomm and myself on the appointment.

'For "auld lang syne" I feel tempted to send you a few notes of my own *début* under the same august banner, copied verbatim from my journals of the period (ætat. 14).

'"August 13, 1799.—Joined the 1st Battalion 9th Regiment, encamped on Barham Downs, as lieutenant.

'"September 13.—Sailed for Holland. 16.—Landed at the Helder. 19.—Battle of Bergen and the Sandhills.

'"October 2.—Do.,' do., before Alkmaar.

'"October 28.—Adventuring homeward again; landing at Yarmouth."

'The regiment enjoyed also the cognomen of "The Holy Boys"—an addition of doubtful origin, however: tradition tracing it on one side to a liberal distribution of "the best of books" among the men by their exemplary commandant and lady; ironically obtained, I fear, on the other by the prodigal sale of these goods presently after in exchange for creature comforts by the graceless recipients.

'Again, every paladin of the corps in my time was very proud of the figure of Britannia (see "Hart's Army List") reposing on the breast of each, melodiously chimed upon and the lay entered, I believe, in its archives by some lady presumably young, regrettably before my time.

'When you go to inaugurate your accession to the throne of the 9th, I hope you will inquire of the elders of the corps, for my especial satisfaction, how far these titles of honour have been preserved in the family. . . .

[1] I am indebted to the kindness of Sir Henry Bates for this interesting and characteristic note.

'Lady Gomm unites with me, my dear Bates, in subscribing myself, as of old, 'Most sincerely yours,

'W. M. GOMM.'

In the next letter to his aunt, dated Barham Downs, September 9, 1799, he says:—

'As I think it will give you pleasure to hear that I have seen Sir Charles Grey, I send you a few lines to inform you that I called upon him a few days ago. He was excessively kind to me, and invited me to dine with him yesterday, which I did. I had the honour of being introduced to Prince William of Gloucester, who inquired very kindly after Henry, and wished to see him if he could go over to Deal before H.R.H. embarked, which, however, I am afraid he cannot do, as the Prince it is supposed embarks to-day. The Duke of York embarked yesterday evening.

'I hope now that I shall go over as a lieutenant, as I have heard nothing further about it since I received your letter. We were in hopes that we should have left Barham Downs last night at twelve o'clock. We are now in hourly expectation of departing, and are only waiting for the transports. I may not be able to write to you again before I am transported. Colonel Fisher has been at Barham Downs, and I am now provided with everything necessary. He does not go with us, being in the 3rd Battalion. We are all going on very well here, and are only wishing to face the enemy. . . . You probably know that General Manners commands the 2nd Battalion of the 9th, and is now with us. . . .

'Pray give my best love to Sophia, and tell her she shall hear some Dutch when I return from Holland.'

Previous to this, in August, the first division of the English force, under Lieut.-General Sir Ralph Abercromby, had landed in Holland, and had effected their landing in spite of the opposition of the Dutch under General Daendels; and the Dutch fleet, under Vice-Admiral Storz, had surrendered at the Texel to Admiral Mitchell. The British thus having

the free navigation of the Zuyder Zee were enabled to establish themselves on the peninsula of the Helder, having the town of Schagenburg as headquarters; while the Dutch troops were concentrated between Rustenberg and the Koe Dyke; and the French troops, hitherto stationed in the province of Zealand, were directed to move towards Haarlem.

Such was the position of the hostile armies in the beginning of September; Sir Ralph Abercromby acting on the defensive and waiting for the Russians and for the British reinforcements under the Duke of York, who was to take the supreme command. General Daendels had been unsuccessful in his attempts to force the British position, and on his part was looking for French reinforcements.

It was on September 12 that the Russian contingent, 7,000 strong, under the command of Lieut.-General D'Hermann, arrived at the Helder from Revel, and were at once disembarked and marched down to strengthen the right of the position; while on the following day his Royal Highness the Duke of York and Lieut.-General Dundas also landed at the Helder from the *Amethyst* frigate, being followed in a few days by the third and last division of British troops, consisting of eleven battalions of infantry, one regiment of cavalry, the 7th Light Dragoons, and a body of artillery. The infantry had embarked at Deal, to which place they had marched from the camp at Barham Downs. After disembarking at the Helder these troops marched up to Schagenburg, where the men were quartered in the churches and the officers billeted on the private houses. The newly arrived regiments were brigaded as follows:—

7th Brigade, under Major-General the Earl of Chatham. 1st, 2nd, and 3rd battalions 4th King's Own, and the 31st Regiment.

8th Brigade, under Major-General H.R.H. Prince William of Gloucester. 1st and 2nd battalions of the 5th, and 1st and 2nd battalions of the 35th Regiments.

9th Brigade, under Major-General Manners. The 1st and 2nd battalions 9th Regiment, and the 56th Regiment.

The 9th Regiment, which had come in the autumn from Grenada, had received 2,695 volunteers from the Gloucester and other Militia corps in the vicinity of London, and had been formed into three battalions, one of which had been left in England. William Gomm was attached to the 1st battalion. Two flank battalions, one of ten companies of Grenadiers, and the other of Light Infantry, under Lieut.-Colonel Shairpe, of the 9th, had been formed before leaving Barham Downs.

The Cavalry were under command of Lieut.-Colonel Paget, and consisted of his own regiment, the 7th Dragoons, the 11th Light Dragoons, under Lieut.-Colonel Childers, and two squadrons of the 18th, in all about 1,200 sabres.

The position of the allied British and Russian army thus reinforced was considerably extended, the Russians being on the right, while the position from which the Duke of York had to drive the enemy was one of no ordinary strength; their left wing, composed entirely of French troops under General Vandamme, was strongly posted on the first ridge of the lofty sandhills known as the Heights of Camperdurger, whence it was expected that our right would dislodge them, and would be able to occupy Bergen, a considerable village in the Nassau Principality, four miles north-west of Alkmaar. Manners' brigade supported the Russians. The battle commenced on the early morning of September 19; and the Russian attack was at first brilliantly successful, the enemy being driven back into Bergen, and Manners' brigade advancing to Schoreldam; at Bergen, however, the enemy being reinforced, rallied, and in their turn beat back the Russians. It was at this juncture, when the fugitive Russians from Bergen appeared outside Schorel, the French following close after them, and when after a last effort to stand they were driven pell mell into and out of the village, that the 9th Brigade, under Major-General Manners, advancing by the road from Schoreldam, engaged the French, and an obstinate encounter took place. The 1st Brigade, under Prince William of Gloucester, and the Guards, brought up by the Duke of York,

came up in support of Manners, but they were eventually obliged to retreat, which they did in an orderly manner—guns, ammunition, waggons, and wounded being brought off in the face of the enemy. The other wing, under Lieut.-General Sir James Pulteney, was successful in defeating General Daendels; but the ill-success of the right wing rendered it impossible for the Duke of York to profit by this success, and it may therefore be said that no result whatever was obtained from the thirteen and a half hours' incessant fighting which constituted the battle of Bergen. That was indeed no child's play when the young William Gomm, a boy of only fourteen, received his 'baptism of fire.' Out of the Gallo-Batavian army on that day some 2,000 of all ranks were killed and wounded, while the loss of the British and Russian troops was equally severe—of the former nearly 1,500, including forty-nine officers, and of the latter 3,000 were killed, wounded, and missing.

By the official return the loss on that day in the 9th Regiment was as follows:—

1st battalion—1 subaltern, 1 staff killed; 3 subalterns wounded; 10 sergeants, 1 drummer, 203 rank and file missing.

2nd battalion—1 captain, 1 sergeant, 16 rank and file killed; 1 lieutenant-colonel, 1 subaltern, 4 sergeants, 46 rank and file wounded; 1 sergeant, 97 rank and file missing.

His diary of the events of the time is as follows:—

'Sept. 18, 1799.—At ten o'clock at night the two battalions of the 9th marched, according to orders, towards the villages of Schorel and Schoreldam, where the French had intrenched themselves, and arrived at the post occupied by the Russians, close to the village above-named, at about two o'clock in the morning of the 19th, after a march of about fourteen miles. Here we halted.

'Sept. 19.—At daybreak, about 3 A.M., the Russians began the attack upon the village of Schorel, and after a pretty obstinate resistance drove the enemy from thence. The two battalions of the 9th advanced gradually in the rear of the Russians, joined by the 56th Regiment, under the command

of Major-General Manners, being the brigade destined to the Reserve of the Russians that day. About 6 A.M. the 9th and 56th Regiments mounted the sandhills behind the village of Schorel in order to drive from thence any enemy that might remain in that part. Having met with none, we descended from the hills, and everything seemed again perfectly quiet. We marched through the village of Schorel and marched on to the plain, when the enemy opened a very heavy fire of musketry and grape upon us. The Russians were now gone off in different directions, and consequently the brigade, consisting of the two battalions of the 9th and the 56th Regiments, was at this time engaged alone; the two battalions of the 9th being each about 600 men, and the 56th Regiment about the same number. For about two hours the heaviest fire of musketry possible was kept up on both sides, the British advancing by degrees, but not very regularly; the plain being intersected every twenty yards nearly with small canals, many of which could not be passed without wading through, being too wide to leap, and at the same time very deep. At length the British advanced with the bayonet. The enemy were unwilling to stand the charge, and retreated very precipitately through Schoreldam, which they were obliged to evacuate, the English still advancing, but in the greatest disorder; for being very much fatigued by the night march, and still more so by the former part of the action, most of the troops were scarcely able to walk. We were therefore ordered not to advance any farther, but to form in the plain between Schorel and Schoreldam, where the action had commenced.

'We remained here about half an hour, when we received intelligence that the enemy were at that time in the very same part of the sandhills behind Schorel where we had been searching for them before we entered into the action on the plain, so that they could never have been driven completely from the sandhills, but must have been in some part of them even at the time we were searching for them.

'Upon this intelligence we were obliged to march against them immediately, notwithstanding our fatigue, to prevent

being cut off, for they were then getting in our rear. We got up the hills as quickly as possible, and the enemy immediately opened a fire upon us from all sides. The enemy's riflemen had got into the woods about Schorel, and by that means fired upon our officers and men on the hills without being themselves seen or exposed.

'The Russians were now returned to our assistance, but our numbers were even then far inferior to those of the enemy, who were now stronger than ever. Had our numbers been known, it is generally believed that we should have been made prisoners, but we were so dispersed about the hills that it was impossible for the enemy to judge of our strength. For about two hours and a half an unceasing fire of musketry was kept up. The enemy had several pieces of cannon upon the hills, with which they played upon us during the whole time. By this time it was nearly one o'clock. Great numbers of our men began to want ammunition. We were ordered to descend from the hills and rally once more, determining to make another vigorous attempt to drive the enemy from the woods and hills. H.R.H. Prince William of Gloucester had now joined us with the 1st battalion of the 35th Regiment. A battalion of the Guards also arrived and advanced upon the sandhills. The 2nd battalion of the 9th, the 1st battalion of the 35th, and the 56th Regiments, after having formed a continued line, began a vigorous fire upon the enemy in the woods, and in a short time drove them a considerable distance along the hills and woods. The Guards lost great numbers upon the hills. Small parties of the Russians were still with us upon the hills. The firing continued till four o'clock, great slaughter being made on both sides. The enemy had now been able to make a stand for the space of about two hours. Nearly the whole of our ammunition was now exhausted, and numbers of our troops being absolutely useless from the excessive fatigues of the day, at about 4.30 P.M. a general retreat was made. While we were retiring a body of the enemy's Hussars came up with the rear of the 9th Regiment (for we happened to be hindmost of those who retreated on that side). They cut down and took

prisoners a few stragglers, but advanced no farther, being unwilling to encounter our Dragoons. The whole of the army took up their former position as soon as possible. Part of the 9th returned to their quarters at Grotskerk the same night. The remainder went only as far as Petten that night. Both our battalions lost nearly the same number in killed and prisoners, our whole loss consisting of about 370 men, or perhaps more.'

The noticeable feature in this diary is, that though it was the young writer's first practical-experience of soldiering and fighting, there is no personal allusion, but a broad, general, and sensible view of the day's action; and this perfect absence of egotism characterised all his military writings.

The boy's own account of this affair in his letter to his aunt, written in the following week, is also singularly fresh and characteristically modest.

'Zante: September 28, 1799.

'MY DEAR AUNT,—I am afraid you have long been expecting to hear from me, but it has been quite impossible for me to write before. We landed at Helder the 16th of this month, and marched forwards immediately into cantonments. On the 19th the Russians began the attack upon the French, intrenched in several small villages before Alkmaar, at three o'clock in the morning. General Manners' brigade, consisting of the 9th and 56th Regiments of Foot, was not engaged till about six o'clock the same morning, having a march of fifteen miles to effect before we reached the enemy. We drove the French from the villages, but they knowing the several roads and passages retreated to some very extensive sandhills behind us, by which they kept us at bay, and being reinforced made a dreadful havoc amongst us. We continued in this manner from about eleven till four o'clock, when, for want of ammunition and fresh reinforcements, we were obliged to retreat. The 9th and 56th have received all the thanks from H.R.H. the Commander-in-Chief due to their distinguished activity and exertions that day. In the beginning of the

action the Russians behaved with the greatest intrepidity, but in the latter part, being very much weakened and fatigued, they for the most part quitted the field, and for a long time the 9th and 56th were the only regiments that faced the enemy. Such is the sketch of the affairs of this horrid day. The 9th has suffered considerable loss, both in men and officers; the first battalion, which was 800 strong, is now scarcely 400. I had the honour of being in the advanced guard, and was engaged the first. I was prepared to die, and assure you that I had so made up my mind to every undertaking that I felt as cool and cheerful as ever I did in my life. The fear of death shall never move me, but the sight of the brave fellows who sank by my side in defence of their King and country was almost too much for me. I cannot express to you what I felt. Colonel De Berniere and Major Gore have proved themselves true friends to me. They have applied to H.R.H. the Duke of York to get me a captain-lieutenancy, which I understand H.R.H. has been graciously pleased to grant. I have not yet received my commission, and I suppose I have not yet been gazetted. Scarcely any of our officers escaped without some slight hurt, and many were killed. A bullet just grazed the corner of my left eye near the beginning of the engagement; it gave me a little headache, but I soon found it was but a scratch. It is now quite well, and there is not even the least mark remaining, which I am very sorry for. I do not mind how many wounds I receive nor how I am disfigured, so as it is all in front. I suppose it was the enchanted sword that saved me. It will not be so elegant when H.R.H. the Princess Mary sees it again as when I had the honour of receiving it from her, but I trust it will not have been disgraced. Our most experienced officers confess that they never were in a more obstinate engagement, nor where they experienced more personal danger. I never thought I could have borne the fatigue I did that day.[1] To render it still more disagreeable, it rained most part of the time. We are now can-

[1] In a memorandum written in after-life, I find it stated that so great was his fatigue that he slept for thirty hours after the battle.

toned in the little village of Zante. We live upon beef and mutton, and so cheap that we cannot spend our pay. We shall all return quite rich. The French are now intrenched upon the sandhills behind the villages of Schoreldam and [torn], where we engaged them before. A general attack is to be made upon them in a day or two. May Heaven afford me sufficient strength to assist my desires! This is all I ask. I will write to you after we have beat the rascals. I hope Sophia and yourself are in good health. Sophia, I dare say, will be very inquisitive about the battle, but pray tell her that when I return she shall know all about it. We embarked at Deal; and I, unluckily, had not an opportunity of seeing my brothers. I hope my next letter will be from Alkmaar. I wish I could see some old newspapers when I return, to find what account they give of our adventures here. I intend to keep a journal of all the principal occurrences during the campaign.

'And believe me, my dear aunt,

'Your dutiful and affectionate nephew,

'W. M. GOMM.

'P.S. I have just learnt that the captain-lieutenancy has been given to a very old lieutenant in the 56th Regiment, but that the next vacancy I shall certainly have it. I am not at all disappointed, knowing that the promotion has been given to a much more experienced officer than myself. There will be many more opportunities.'

What a model letter for the young soldier to have written in the midst of the discomforts of camp life!

On October 2 another battle was fought at Alkmaar, and the Gallo-Batavian army was driven back. The 9th Regiment was not, however, actively engaged on that day, having been employed as a reserve to the main body under Sir Ralph Abercromby. The obstinate nature of that engagement is shown by the heavy return of killed and wounded in the 92nd Regiment alone, 1 colonel, 5 captains, 8 subalterns, 9 sergeants, and 268 rank and file being killed and wounded. Nor in the engagement

near Egmont, on October 6, was the 9th Regiment actively engaged. On October 18 the Duke of York effected a convention with the enemy, engaging to retire from the Helder immediately, and to give up all the prisoners and guns which had been taken during the campaign. An armistice was concluded, and the whole of the British and Russian forces, together with the Dutch loyalist deserters, left the coast of the Batavian Republic and returned to England.

'Helder: October 19, 1799.

'My dear Aunt,—I have at length found an opportunity of writing to you, which I have often wished for since my last letter, but have not till now been able to attain. You must be acquainted with all the particulars of our proceedings since our landing, and therefore it will be needless to give any account of them.

'Since September 19 the 9th has not been engaged, though we have often been upon the point of going into action. We are now encamped close to Helder, for the purpose of assisting in raising some works begun here. From the appearance of things at present, we shall soon see old England again, I believe. You need not doubt me when I say I shall be happy, but I confess that if we had been more successful I had rather have gone forward, and had a few more scuffles before I returned. If we return, I hope at least our brigade may cover the retreat, that we may smell gunpowder once more. I have not time to send you a long letter, but can only say that I am as well as it is possible to be, and that I like my profession if possible better every day. I have heard from my brother. Henry asks me whether I have yet been in battle! I hope you and Sophia are both well, and that you received my last letter of the 21st of last month. I am afraid this writing is scarcely legible, but I am so cold in my tent that I can scarcely hold my pen. I hope I shall see all my friends soon, but I am quite prepared to go where the regiment is ordered.'

It was, however, on the previous day that the convention had been finally concluded at Alkmaar, and hostilities entirely

ceased. The 9th Regiment embarked on October 25, and on the 28th landed at Yarmouth and marched to Norwich.

Thus, before he was fifteen years of age, he was back again in England, 'an old soldier,' with the experiences of a campaign hard-fought and not inglorious, even though not actually successful, nor definite in its results.

Looking back over his boyish journal, some years afterwards, he writes the following 'Recollection of September 19, 1799':—

'The spell of parted years is on my dream,
And hazards, more intense than wont to live
In boyhood's chronicle, around me gleam:
And, for the stripling's jocund narrative
Of perils wag'd around some rifled hive
Or ambush 'scaped of pedagogue in arms,
Mine breathes of host's array, and memory warms
With her first glance on lists where nations strive.
Hymn[1] of the Muscovite! that roused the morn,
Thou wert a stern and awful orison
On my boy-ear:—and dread, ye echoes! borne
Upon the breezes of the coming day:
Dread, but exalting:—and my musings run
Back upon those throng'd hours, nor wake dismay.
'W. M. G., 1836.'

A pamphlet, written 'by a subaltern,' called 'The Campaign in Holland in 1799,' and published in 1861, to which I am indebted for some of the above details, thus sums up the conclusion of the expedition:—

'On their return home the thanks of Parliament were voted to Vice-Admiral Mitchell, Lieut.-General Sir Ralph Abercromby, and the officers and men employed under them; and

[1] At the battle of Bergen, or of the Sandhills, as it is sometimes called, fought under the Duke of York in Holland, the Russians advanced their batteries through the deep and difficult ground, with their characteristic energy, to the attack of the French intrenchments at daybreak, as is their custom, with hymns and inspiriting choruses, and worthily emulated the recent successes of Souvaroff in Italy, in the intrepidity of their first assault. Not so in their conduct after success—they dispersed to plunder, and were in their turn routed presently after; and the British Brigade, under General Manners, appointed as their sustaining force, bore the brunt of the conflict through the remainder of the day, till reinforced by the Guards and other portions of the line.

on January 9, 1800, the former was invested with the Order of the Bath. The city of London also voted their thanks to the Admiral and General, and presented each with a sword, valued at 100 guineas. These honours were certainly well deserved, as, although the expedition failed to accomplish its principal objects, which were for the army to overrun Holland, threaten the French on the Meuse and the Rhine, and, after causing a rising in Belgium to carry the war into the northern provinces of France, yet the capture of the Dutch fleet at the Helder was achieved, whereby their marine was almost annihilated, the projects of France disconcerted, and the necessity of maintaining a large squadron in the North Sea for the blockade of the Texel obviated. The principal reasons for the ill-success which subsequently befell it were the extreme tardiness of the first operation, caused by the landing of the troops in successive divisions, and the refusal of the Dutch people, of whose willingness to assist the army great expectations had been entertained, to favour its operations in any way whatever. As for the British public, they completely overlooked the success of our navy at the Texel, and clamoured loudly at what they considered the inadequate results of an expedition which had cost them so dear, both in men and money; and in Parliament, the orators of the Opposition bitterly censured the Ministry, both for the motives which had prompted the expedition and the manner in which it was conceived.'

CHAPTER III.

1800–1805.

COAST OF PORTUGAL—VIGO BAY—GIBRALTAR—LISBON—RETURN HOME—AIDE-DE-CAMP TO GENERAL COMMANDING N.W. DISTRICT—IRELAND—JOINS STAFF COLLEGE, HIGH WYCOMBE—COMES OF AGE—CORRESPONDENCE WITH HIS AUNT.

UNTIL the middle of the year 1800 the 9th Regiment was quartered in Norwich, but in July they were ordered to embark on foreign service, which they did, not knowing their destination.

From Diary.

'August 1, 1800.—Embarked on board the *Brailsford* transport at Southampton.

'The regiments embarked are Major-General Manners' Brigade—viz. the three battalions of the 9th Foot; Major-General Coote's Brigade—viz. the 13th and 54th Regiments; Major-General Lord Cavan's Brigade, 79th and 52nd Regiments, together with the Royals and 27th Regiments, under Major-General Morshead.'

To his Aunt.

'Vigo Bay: August 30, 1800.

'This is the first opportunity I have had of writing to you since I left England. We sailed from Southampton on the 6th. On the 16th we arrived at Quiberon Bay, off the island of Belle Isle, with full expectation of attacking it. This, however, we afterwards found was not our destination. We sailed from Quiberon on the 22nd, and arrived on the Spanish coast, near Ferrol, on the 25th. Here we landed the same day without opposition, except from a small fort, which was soon silenced. We then advanced up

the country as soon as we were landed towards Ferrol, which was about six miles from the shore. The rifle corps were engaged a little in the evening, but very slightly. The intention in landing here was to get possession of six or seven Spanish sail of the line in the harbour, which, they say, are loaded with immense treasure. We slept on our arms in the night, and at about 5 A.M. a firing was commenced by the Spanish. The 52nd and 79th Regiments were engaged, and, I believe, another regiment or two, for about half an hour, when the Spaniards retreated; indeed, there never were more than a thousand of them together, so that you may easily conceive the fire could not be very heavy. The 9th was not actually engaged, though we were close in the rear ready to blaze if required. I have not yet told you that this part of the country is very hilly, indeed mountainous. Everything was now done but the taking Fort St. Philip, a very strong work, which prevented our men-of-war from sailing into the harbour and attacking the shipping, as it commanded the channel. To take the fort we only wanted to get our cannon to bear upon it; but to our great disappointment we found it impossible to get it up the heights, so that all our plans were frustrated. We were close to Ferrol the whole day, upon an eminence which commanded the whole town. We were in hopes of being able to storm the fort, but this was pronounced impracticable by the engineers from its very strong situation. It was a great disappointment to us when we reflected that town, shipping, dollars, and everything else were ours if it had been possible to bring our cannon into the country. Nothing was now left but to relinquish our enterprise, and the troops were re-embarked the same afternoon. Though the old 9th have not an opportunity of being engaged yet, the 1st battalion had the honour of covering the retreat of the whole army. We were left on the heights till the rest were embarked, to resist the enemy should they attempt to follow; but the poor fellows were very glad to let us off without any obstruction; indeed, I believe they would have lent us boats to row us to our ships if it had been necessary. They seem to be

very poor soldiers; the French would have made it much warmer work for us. We marched a single battalion six miles along their country, and even saw them on the adjacent heights kindling their fires (for it was quite dark), and the fellows were afraid to assault us in the least, when they might, in our opinions, have cut us to pieces had they shown the least spirit. I assure you we thought ourselves in a much more disagreeable situation than they chose to make it for us. On the 27th we sailed from Ferrol, and are now in Vigo Bay. The country is, indeed, more beautiful than I can describe it to you. We are close in shore. We have heard this morning that we are now going to Gibraltar, there to meet with Sir Ralph Abercromby's army and to attack Cadiz. Another report is that we are going to different parts of the Mediterranean. . . . The best direction I can give you is Lieut.-General Sir James Pulteney's Floating Army, off the coast of Spain. . . .'

The journal entries for some days are only 'at anchor in Vigo Bay,' which is soon increased by 'tired of Vigo Bay.'

On September 6 there was a violent hurricane, in which some of the vessels were driven ashore, but the *Brailsford*, though she dragged her anchor, managed to hold, running foul of a frigate or two.

The *Brailsford* sailed for the Straits of Gibraltar, and anchored for some days at Tetuan Bay, on the Morocco coast; and the diary records how, though forbidden to go ashore on account of the 'plague,' the young officers 'used to disguise ourselves as sailors when the boats go for water and smuggle grapes, figs, fowls, and everything that we can catch hold of.'

In the beginning of October they went across to Cadiz.

'*October* 5, 1800.—The ships belonging to Sir Ralph Abercromby's army, which did not join us at Tetuan, joined us in coming through the Straits. We lay about two leagues off the shore. Flags of truce are passing and repassing from the

shore to our fleet during the whole day, but we can learn nothing of the proceedings. We expect signals for landing every moment. We hear to-day that General Manners is removed from our brigade, which is a great disappointment, for we hoped to be again on service with a commanding officer who had gained the love and esteem of his brigade. He sent us a shoulder of mutton and six bottles of wine.'

The three battalions of the 9th Regiment were then put under command of Major-General Fisher, and a general order was issued by Sir James Pulteney on October 5 detailing the landing which was to be effected that night. The wind, however, rose, and the surf was so high they were unable to land, but had to put out again to sea. On October 12 they were once more in Tetuan Bay, after encountering contrary winds, as usual, in the Straits. The journal says: 'The old tub *Brailsford* has the singular property of making about twice as much leeway as headway.' They remained off and on at Tetuan till the end of the month.

'*October* 31.—Anchored in Gibraltar Bay. We understand that the three battalions of the 9th are to go to Lisbon. Several other regiments to go with us. The remainder to go, under the command of Sir Ralph Abercromby, up the Mediterranean. We are permitted to go ashore at Gibraltar, on account of our having no sick, being the healthiest ship in the fleet.

'*November* 1.—Land this morning and see the guard mount. We go round the works. Find the town a miserable hole. They have no fresh provisions, on account of the plague raging in Barbary, from whence they get all their fresh provisions. We look upon ourselves as the luckiest fellows existing in not remaining here, which we had long been afraid would have been the case.'

At the same time he writes to his aunt from Gibraltar, showing how weary the troops were of doing nothing but knocking about on board ship. He says:—

'I have been in as good health since I have been on

board this "elegant ship," the *Brailsford*, as ever I was in my life, though, God knows, it is not from the comforts we have enjoyed. If we were doing our country service in lying on board transports in the manner we have done, that alone would remove all the inconveniences we labour under. We should then live sumptuously on salt junk; but rolling about in this way for no earthly purpose whatever, I own, does not suit with my taste. However, I believe we shall still remain loyal subjects. The army will not always be lying on board transports. I hope for the credit of the British army that something will soon be done worthy of them. I am afraid that the business of Ferrol and other occurrences are represented in a very disadvantageous light; but, however, I hope soon "you shall see what you shall see." We expect to winter in Portugal—at least everybody tells us we shall. We are all heartily glad that we are not destined to garrison Gibraltar, which we were once afraid of. I have been told that this is the place to make an officer, but at the same time it is a bad place for a young officer. The field is a much better school for him than a garrison—as our colonel often tells me. The town is a wretched hole. They have scarcely anything in it, having no intercourse with Barbary, from a report that the plague rages there. Everything they have is at an enormous price, and there is never any amusement for an officer but gaming and drinking. We have some prospects before us in going to Portugal; we shall have everything in plenty there, and may see a little service.'

To his Aunt.

'Off Lisbon: November 14, 1800.

'In my last letter from Gibraltar I told you we expected to sail for Lisbon every hour, but we were obliged to go back to Tetuan Bay again to get a supply of water. We sailed from Tetuan on the 5th, and got in sight of the rock of Lisbon on the 12th, with a fine breeze most of the time. On the 12th the wind came against us, and separated the fleet, which con-

sisted of about twenty-five sail convoyed by a frigate. Yesterday a lugger hove in sight about 6 A.M. From her appearance we supposed her to be an enemy. There was only one transport with us, so that we should cut a very poor figure against a lugger, which in general carries heavy metal. She hoisted English colours and passed us about twelve, though not within gunshot. We did not admire her hoisting English colours, which looked rather suspicious. She hovered round us some time, and at last went out to sea, when we perceived that she took down all her sails and put up fresh ones, which gave her quite a different appearance. This confirmed us in our opinion that she had some evil designs, and we expected a visit from her in the night. About four o'clock a pilot came on board us, who said she was a Spaniard, who had been cruising off Lisbon for three or four days past. Upon this we prepared ourselves as well as we could, resolved to do our best, and stand out to the last. During the whole fourteen weeks we have been at sea, we have been generally separated from the rest of the fleet off the Spanish coast, for we are one of the slowest sailers in the fleet. After having been so long exposed to the mercy of any enemy that chose to appear, it would be hard indeed to be taken in sight of Lisbon, where we expected our cruise would be at an end. The evening was very dark, so that it was difficult to perceive a ship unless very near. About 8 P.M. the lugger passed close across our bows, with the intention we suppose of seeing what we were. We determined the next time she came near us to fire into her, and find out what she was, but we did not see her afterwards. Most likely seeing us to be a troopship, she did not like attacking us as she would perhaps lose a number of men, and could not gain much if she took us.

'Thus ended the premeditated achievements of the *Brailsford* transport off Lisbon!

'This morning the wind came fair, and we are now at anchor in the harbour. The greatest part of the fleet are a great way to the leeward, and will most probably not get in for several days. It has always been a recommendation to the regi-

ment, as well as a satisfaction to all the officers, that since we embarked from England we are the healthiest regiment in the whole army. Some regiments have two or three hundred sick, and their ships are perfect hospitals. I do not believe we have twelve men sick in the whole three battalions. In our ship we have not one.'

To his Aunt.

'Lisbon: December 10, 1800.

'I told you in my last that we expected to land every day, but barracks could not be got ready till about a fortnight ago. All the officers are in lodgings, as there are no barracks for us. We are allowed lodging money, so that we are very well off. I have got into a very comfortable box, with two other officers, which, however, I believe we shall not keep long, as we have had orders to return to England. You no doubt heard this long before us. It is reported that we are going to war with Russia. I hope this is far from being the case.

'We are very well pleased with our quarters here; Lisbon is a very fine city, but I never was in a dirtier place. We have not seen all the lions yet, but as our stay is so uncertain, I have determined to have a peep at everything worth seeing before I leave the place. I have received the most flattering encouragement and marked attention from Sir James Pulteney and General Manners. Pray tell Colonel Benson when you see him that Sir James Pulteney inquired very much after him when I dined with him last Sunday. I cannot help mentioning that it is entirely to him that I owe all the attention I have been honoured with. I have forgot to tell you that Colonel Fisher is appointed Brigadier-General, and commands the 3rd battalion of the 9th. We lost General Manners when we were lying off Cadiz. Never were fellows more disappointed, for though I have the greatest respect for Colonel Fisher, yet we could not help regretting the loss of a commanding officer with whom we had been on service before, and who we all hoped would have headed us when we expected to attack Cadiz. He was beloved and respected by men and officers.'

His notebook entry about the same time is—

'Lisbon would appear to much greater advantage were the streets kept clean, which is far from being the case. Their churches are magnificent; the altar-piece in St. Roque is said to be the richest in Europe. The aqueduct which supplies all Lisbon with water, situated about three miles from the town, is reported to be the grandest of the kind in the world. This stood unshaken during the great earthquake (1755) which convulsed the whole country round, as appears from its rugged appearance and the ruins. The people seem an indolent race; quiet if unmolested, but once provoked revengeful to excess. It is looked upon as a prodigy if three or four murders are not committed every week. They are bigoted to the Catholic religion. They seem to have a great aversion to the English.

'Several men have been murdered since we came here. Their soldiers (such as we have seen) appear sluggish and ill-disciplined. We suppose that our coming has raised the price of provisions, for they are very dear. The weather is fine, and the heat sometimes oppressive, even at this time of year. Their principal amusements are on Sunday. The opera is very good, though perhaps inferior to that of London.'

In December orders for returning home were received, and on the 20th the 9th Regiment were once more on board the old *Brailsford*. They sailed out of the Tagus on the 29th; but the new century began for them inauspiciously, as they encountered very heavy weather, which on the 3rd increased to a gale. The diary says:—

'At 7 P.M. gale more violent than ever, with heavy rain. The old *Brailsford* sprung a leak; we are now worse off than ever; they have three feet of water in our hold; however, we manage to stop it up pretty well, but not completely.

'*4th.*—The gale increases at night; we are in danger of running aboard a ship, the man at our helm being drunk—bad work!'

On the 21st they reached Portsmouth, but after the ship had been fumigated they were re-embarked for Jersey.

'Heard of the news of the death of General Goldsworthy, January 8.

'*February* 1.—We land at St. Aubins and march to St. Heliers. We are in the Granville barracks, the 2nd and 3rd battalions in the town. This is a very fine island, and we are in the pleasantest part of it. Our men are falling sick every day, on account of having been on board ship so long.

'24.—We have now scarcely 200 effective men in the battalion, which was 700 strong. The other battalions are very sickly, though not so bad as we. It is reported that the French intend attacking the island. We should at this moment muster a very small force, but they are British soldiers!

'Recruiting parties are ordered to be sent to England immediately from each battalion. I am appointed aide-de-camp [1] to General Benson.

'*March* 10.—Embark on board the packet with my recruiting party, landing next day at Southampton, and send my party on to Liverpool.

'*April* 1.—Arrive at Liverpool. I was unsuccessful, in common with nearly the whole army, in raising men.'

In June 1802 Gomm rejoined his regiment in Silverdale, and in August they went to Chatham; in October to Plymouth.

1803.—Early in this year he raised men for rank, and thereby got his promotion to a field officer's company in June.

In September the regiment embarked for Ireland, 'landed at Kinsale, a wretched hole. March through Cork to Kilkenny, county Tipperary, very highly cultivated: Cork, mountainous and barren. Kilkenny, very flat, but rich and well cultivated. The regiment is reviewed here by the Com-

[1] That the duties of aide-de-camp were discharged to the satisfaction of the public is testified by the fact that, at a common council, held on January 6, 1802, on the motion of the Mayor, Peter Whitfield Berncher, Esq., Lieutenant William Gomm was presented with the freedom of the City of Liverpool, for his general attention to the duties of his office as aide-de-camp to Major-General Benson, commanding officer of the North-Western District, during the time of his residence in the town.

mander-in-Chief, Lord Cathcart. Two of our sentries were fired at by some mischievous persons—a trick much practised in Dublin at this time by the disaffected—chiefly upon the yeomanry, at night; one of them was wounded in the ham, the offender never discovered. Some of us fall in love with Kilkenny.'

'1804.—In the beginning of January the regiment marched to Kilbeggen, Moat, and Clara, county Westmeath. A very flat country all the way; the roads remarkably good; provisions much cheaper than in England; the people indignant to excess. Accommodation on the roads indifferent. The country is quiet now; invasion by the French, or rather an attempt at invasion, daily expected. The regular force in the country is supposed to be about twenty-six thousand, militia included.

'We found Portarlington the only town worth noticing on our route; it is much smaller than Kilkenny, and appears to have little to do with trade, but there are many excellent houses, and consequently I suppose there is a very genteel society.'

It is no doubt matter for some surprise to find that William Gomm, who joined his regiment as a mere boy, and at once went abroad on active service, should have found time and opportunity to make himself a well-educated man, both in history, classics, and modern languages; for in those days our regimental messes were not supposed to represent a high state of mental culture. One of the secrets of his success is given in a letter to his sister from Kilbeggen, January 17, 1804.

'I generally pass my mornings, when not engaged in regimental duty, with which by-the-bye, we are far from bein g overburdened at present, in reading history.' In the same letter occurs the following amusing story: 'I do not know if you have ever heard of the famous Lady Cuffe. She keeps the inn at this place; we have been not a little entertained at the story of her obtaining and retaining the title. It is first of all necessary to tell you that the Lord-Lieutenant of Ireland has, or had, the power of knighting whom he thought proper. The Duke of Rutland, while presiding in this country, hap-

pening to pass by Kilbeggen, was so well pleased with the entertainment afforded him by Mr. Cuffe, the innkeeper—no less in regard to drinking than eating, we may reasonably imagine—that his Grace, in the plenitude of his power, conferred the rank of knighthood upon his noble host the same evening. Disapproving the next morning of the hasty step he had taken, His Grace expressed his wishes to Sir Peter that the business should be considered null and void. Sir Peter is said to have replied that being a man of moderate desires, and an enemy professed to all pomp and vanity, he for his part would cheerfully resign his new-fledged honours, but that he had consulted "Lady Arabella" on the subject, whose sentiments were far from being so humble as the knight's, in consequence of which His Grace gave up the point, and *Lady* Cuffe has been acknowledged by all ranks and sizes of people. She appears now to be about seventy years of age, and is in high health and beauty.'

In March the 9th Regiment was moved to Dublin, where he writes:—'The garrison is supposed to consist of 5,000 men; we have eight regiments of infantry and two of cavalry. Lord Cathcart reviews the greater part of us in general three times a week; this employs us nearly the whole morning, so you may perceive his lordship intends, if possible, to rid our characters of the charge of idleness, for which failing the army is so notorious. The Lord-Lieutenant invited the garrison to the Castle ball on St. Patrick's night, and in consequence of our very recent arrival His Excellency very graciously waived the ceremony of a formal presentation, and requested our attendance also that evening; we availed ourselves of the opportunity, and were highly gratified with a display of everything that Dublin can produce in the way of elegance and fashion. Since then we have attended the Drawing-room, and had the honour of being presented to Lady Hardwicke.'

As an instance of how well they were kept employed he says in his letter of June 18, 1804: 'A few mornings ago

Lord Cathcart ordered the entire garrison under arms a little after twelve o'clock, and after marching us about ten miles towards Drogheda and taking up several positions, we returned home a little before three the following afternoon, so that we were kept in motion nearly fifteen hours, the greater part of which was under a broiling sun; but this is a superior sort of drill, which, as it affords us instruction of the most necessary kind, so from its novelty there is a sort of amusement attending its fatigue.'

A subaltern of the present day would scarcely write so pleasantly of a fifteen hours' march.

While at Dublin he applied for leave to join the Military College at High Wycombe. This college had been established about the year 1801, and had been placed under the superintendence of General Jarry, who had been aide-de-camp to Frederick the Great. At that time Howard Douglas was superintendent of the senior department, and he eventually succeeded Jarry as commandant. In Mr. Fullom's 'Life of Sir Howard Douglas,' a just tribute is paid to the excellent influence exercised by him over the young officers who studied there. Shortly after his joining the college he writes to his aunt:—

'I have managed to get over this formidable examination, which resembled, however, in many points that which you gave me an account of, and indeed I am very glad you had prepared me for a question similar to Pontius Pilate, for the mathematician attacked me with such an air of importance that I really began to doubt whether I was master of long division. From what I have hitherto been able to collect, I do not see a prospect of carrying myself a mile out of the town, except on a Sunday, which is a day of rest.

'The hours of fagging are from nine in the morning until four in the afternoon; they will shortly commence at eight and end at three. The time is divided in this manner: the two first hours are given up to French and German; the two following hours are applied to mathematics, and drawing is

taught from two to four. There are six classes for each of these studies, but very few go beyond the fifth, and it is so managed that each of the branches should keep pace with the other; for which purpose when an officer has attained the knowledge necessary for the class he belongs to in one branch of his study he is made to apply more immediately to those in which he is not so forward, and is not promoted until he has made equal progress in all. I am fortunate to begin with the fourth class of French, which I find to be a great advantage. The study of German is optional, but of course I shall not hesitate a moment in offering myself for it; but this is not permitted to be taught until the fourth class of French is attained, so that there are officers here who have been a twelvemonth preparing themselves, and are only now beginning the German grammar.

'The teachers seem all perfectly masters of their task, and show great attention.

'The expense I shall incur here will be very little more than with the regiment, after paying the subscription, which is thirty guineas annually, and the purchase of a horse, which last, however, will not be necessary for the present, as the sketching does not commence till April 1, and there is a great deal of drudgery to get over before I can be admitted as a candidate for this part of the study; however, I mean to fag hard at the dry part, and get over it as soon as I can. The mess is regulated upon the same plan with that of a regiment, excepting that the quantity of wine is limited, as I explained to you the other morning. I am fortunate in meeting an old Woolwich acquaintance here; we are both beginners.

'The officers are a very genteel set, and I assure you they seem in general very tolerably disposed to work hard. I shall write to you or Sophia again shortly, and have only to add now that I am very much pleased with my situation. I had forgot to tell you about my lodging. I pay 14*s.* a week for it, and am allowed 8*s.* I believe it is actually the cheapest in the town, and at the same time a very good one.'

As illustrative of this period of his life, the following note written by Sir William to Sir Archibald Alison is interesting:—

'33, Brunswick Terrace, Brighton: December 12, 1864.

'My dear Sir Archibald,—I rejoice to gather from public report that you are engaged in writing a "Life of Lord Hardinge." There could be no worthier employment even for *your* pen.

'I do not presume, unbidden, to offer details for your acceptance in furtherance of the good work, and few they are that I could furnish from my own experience—so widely separated have been the scenes of our respective callings from the period of youth upwards—but there is one anecdote of his early life always a favourite one with me, which it is possible may not have reached you through any other channel—so many of our compeers in age having passed from this scene—an anecdote, however, which I feel persuaded you would not willingly let die while engaged in setting forth the true nobility of the character.

'We were fellow-students at the Royal Military College of High Wycombe in the years 1805–6, and I recollect Deare, a fine young ensign of the 3rd (now Fusilier) Guards, giving us while seated round the mess-table one day after dinner an animated account of the landing in Egypt, in which operation the Guards, as was ever their wont, bore no mean part, and in the course of which he was wounded; and I see Hardinge, at this moment seated opposite to me, bursting into tears at the stirring recital, inveighing bitterly against the jade Fortune who suffered that young fellow to have already seen and done so much while she kept him still a laggard from the real field of action!

'I recollect, too, that the incident brought to my mind at the moment the parallel bearing recorded of the yet unlaurelled Cæsar while contemplating the exploits of the young Alexander, and I drew a happy augury from the circumstance.

'We were very intimate at Wycombe, I have always been proud to feel, and the affection was lasting, uninterrupted

by personal estrangement to the close of his brilliant career; and I may thus hope for your indulgence while intruding upon you as I am here doing.—Believe me to be, my dear Sir Archibald,

'Faithfully yours,

'W. M. GOMM.'

From a memo in his handwriting it appears that the following were some of his fellow-students at High Wycombe in 1805-6:—

Captain	Douglas,	afterwards	General Sir James Douglas, K.C.B.
„	Herries,	„	General Sir William Herries, K.C.H. and C.B.
„	Hardinge,	„	General Viscount Hardinge, G.C.B.
„	Brotherton,	„	General Sir Joseph Brotherton.
„	Langton		
„	Dickson,	„	Sir J. Dickson.
„	Scovell,	„	General Sir George Scovell, K.C.B.
„	Campbell,	„	Major-General Sir James Campbell, Bart.
„	Thorn,	„	Major-General Thorn, K.H.
„	Frankland,	„	Killed at Roliça.
„	Le Messnier,	„	Killed at Albuera.
„	Murray,	„	Sir George Murray.

All the above served on the staff of the Quartermaster-General through the Peninsular war, in charge of divisions of the army. Colonel Le Marchant (afterwards Sir Gaspard Le Marchant), who was killed at Salamanca, was governor of the college, and Lieut.-Colonel Douglas (afterwards General Sir Howard Douglas) was superintendent.

On November 10, while at High Wycombe, Captain Gomm came of age. How sensible a woman his aunt and guardian, Miss Jane Gomm, was, is shown by the following letter which she wrote to him on the occasion:—

'Lower Lodge, Windsor: November 11, 1805.

'MY DEAR WILLIAM,—Had it been in my power I should have made your birthday yesterday as merry as possible, but I cannot give fêtes. However, it was impossible for me not to feel more than usual on your twenty-first birthday. It

is the period at which all men are called upon, rich or not rich, to act for themselves. You will therefore forgive me, I hope, if I say something on the occasion. You, my dear William, will not be encumbered with riches or a great income to manage, but you have, in my opinion, fully as great a task before you, and that is to maintain the good character you have already obtained by your early entrance into life. You have been endowed by the Almighty with a greater facility of apprehension and a greater desire of improvement than falls to the share of most young men of your age. You must therefore naturally feel a superiority in that respect which is very pardonable; but as you value your fame, never allow these sensations to carry you away. Self-conceit and assurance disfigure the most transcendent merit, and are odious in every rank. It is as unbecoming to a prince as it is in any other situation of life. Modest merit is always amiable; and people will always be more ready to acknowledge eminent qualities in those that do not put them forward themselves, and their excellence will be beloved as much as admired.

'There is, beside, another though more trifling subject on which you and every military man should be put on his guard, and that is with respect to manners. Living much with men makes people boisterous, noisy, and inattentive to what they say and do. Situated as young men are in the army, nothing but the most scrupulous attention on this score can prevent their contracting these habits, and as you will most probably live still more with men than ever, I cannot help giving you this caution. I am anxious to see you good and great, and I wish that, in addition to all these qualities, your manners may have the polish those of a gentleman ought to have. Alas! human nature is so prone to contract bad habits, and especially the habits of those we are sometimes forced to live with, that the safest is to be upon our guard at every age, and never to relax on that point.

'Upon a more essential subject than any I have yet mentioned, I flatter myself your principles are fixed. Yet I cannot help beseeching you to be on your guard against the

wretched casuistry and the levity you may meet with at home and abroad. For that reason never enter into jokes upon religious subjects; nobody can tell how far a joke may carry one. You cannot pretend to reform the unprincipled men that may fall in your way; but you may show them you do not like to listen to them. I say this more for what you may meet with abroad than in England; for, thank God! irreligion is not the vice of the age with us, but I am afraid you will find that it is so on the Continent.

'As this is not written to reproach you with any defects you may have, my dear William, but to warn you from catching the many errors you will find floating in society, I hope you will not take it as a reproof, but as the advice of one who has lived much longer than you in the world, and who is most anxious about you. May the Almighty bless you and preserve you from the many faults human nature is subject to, is, and will be, my constant prayer. Do not answer this letter, but let your whole life be a proof that you have attended to these injunctions, and I cannot experience a greater satisfaction; and believe me ever, my dear William,

'Your truly affectionate aunt,

'JANE GOMM.'

This letter, which he evidently prized highly, is found carefully stored among his papers, put into a separate cover and docketed by him. His reply was unusually brief, being merely a sentence in a note written the following day about a projected visit to his aunt at Windsor.

'MY DEAREST AUNT,—I received yesterday morning your letter. You have pointed out to me the manner in which you would have it answered. I think you will believe me sincere when I promise you I have read it more than once, and that if I am ever fortunate enough in the least to resemble the model it presents me with, I shall have attained the first ambition of my soul. With my best love to Sophia, and kindest

remembrances to Miss Goldsworthy, believe me, my dear aunt, 'Ever gratefully and affectionately yours,

'W. M. GOMM.'

That these were no idle promises is best shown by William Gomm's whole after-life. His good aunt, at his entry into it, warned him against three things—viz. arrogance, rough manners, and irreligion; and all who knew him most readily admit that for nothing was the old Field-Marshal more noted than for his singular modesty, his pure-minded and old-fashioned courtesy, while his deep religious principles pervaded and influenced his whole life. Seldom have precept and promise been so closely and fully covered by action.

CHAPTER IV.

1805–1808.

EXPEDITION TO BREMEN—RETURNS TO STAFF COLLEGE—PASSES EXAMINATION—EXPEDITION TO STRALSUND—BOMBARDMENT OF COPENHAGEN—ARMY RECEIVES THANKS OF PARLIAMENT.

TOWARDS the end of the year 1805 William Gomm's studies at the Military College were broken in upon by a call to arms. He had heard that his regiment was under orders for India, and was to embark almost immediately. He therefore hurried up to London and saw General Brownrigg, the Adjutant-General; but as the destination of the regiment was so uncertain, he was divided between his anxiety to effect an exchange so as to avoid going to India, and his extreme desire *not* to exchange if there was a chance of his regiment being ordered on active service in Europe.

'London: November 21, 1805.

'It is impossible, my dear aunt, for anything to have been more kind than General Brownrigg's behaviour to me this morning. . . . To cut the matter short, I must tell you plump that I am neither going to India nor going with the Guards; but I hope I am going to the Mediterranean. Before I go any further I must tell you a good thing, which is, that I have positively let General Brownrigg into the secret of the regiment being destined for India. Who would ever have thought that Captain William Gomm should have been beforehand with the Quartermaster-General in news about his own regiment? I shall tell this as a triumph some time hence; but, unfortunately, when it would go down so much better, it is probably more prudent that I should be tongue-tied upon the subject. But, to proceed. As I was going to say, he pro-

tested to me that he knew nothing of the regiment being destined for India. At the same time, he thought it a very likely thing that the Duke of York, out of kindness to him, would take such a measure, as it was always considered advantageous to the colonel; and from what his Royal Highness had mentioned to Princess Mary, there could be no doubt of his intentions. I then begged of him to consider that my only wish was to avoid going to India in making an exchange, and that as I was convinced the regiment was not destined for that quarter immediately, being at present under orders for embarkation, it might possibly be intended for more active service. In this case I begged of him, for God's sake, not to suffer me to take any steps towards a removal from the regiment till it was released from any engagement of this sort. He told me they had certainly been destined for the Mediterranean, but that so many changes had lately taken place (and he mentioned the situation of Portugal) that, upon his honour, he knew not at this moment their destination. Until I know more, I shall have nothing but golden dreams when I sleep. I hope you will not construe this unworthily into any allusion to prize money. Then we came more immediately to the subject of exchange. He said it would be the height of madness to think of it. I was a little surprised at his telling me I had better have asked the Duke to give me a majority, instead of leave to exchange. I should as soon have thought of asking for the Gold Stick when it became vacant. He then made another proposal to me, which I confess I should have been afraid to have made to him, which was to apply for leave of absence, and by that means to remain with the 2nd battalion, and he thought no reflection would attach to me for this mode of proceeding; but I confess that much as I respect his sanction for any step I may take, I had rather go any other way to work than this. The fact is, he sees the exchange with the same eyes that Doctor Johnson did the enlisting a boy into the navy—viz. nobody would go there who had interest to get into Newgate. This other plan I have great hopes of getting accomplished. There is now only one captain above me who,

he thinks, will not purchase, and as one of the lieut.-colonels is upon the point of leaving the regiment and selling out, I may stand a chance of coming in for the majority by purchase, which will, of course, bring me into the 2nd battalion. . . .'

His quiet studies at High Wycombe and his doubts about applying for an exchange were alike put an end to on finding at the beginning of December that his regiment was ordered to embark at once on foreign service. He posted up to London, but, finding that the regiment had already sailed, he posted down to Ramsgate, where he found the *Isis*, with part of the 9th on board, forced in by the weather; he, therefore, secured a passage in her. The fleet had sailed so suddenly that 'I am not the only one left behind. Colonel de Berniere, and three or four other officers, have not joined. I have heard or seen nothing of them.'

A few days afterwards, December 21, 1805, he writes from Deal to his aunt, reporting that the *Ariadne* was missing. 'She is the headquarter ship of the regiment; the flower of the regiment is on board her. Colonel de Berniere arrived here while she was weighing her anchor, and sailed with her. She is one of the largest and finest ships in the fleet. The number on board is near 300, including my own company, with which I should have sailed, had I been in time. This is sometimes a painful reflection to me. You will not be surprised at our being a little, or more than a little, anxious on the subject. Possibly she has reached her destination. She is a very fine ship. I sail on board the *Harriet*, which is at present the headquarter ship, and beyond comparison one of the finest in the fleet in every respect. Orders arrived yesterday by express for the fleet to put to sea immediately.

'22*nd*. There was no post yesterday. Nine o'clock: the signal is just made for sailing. The wind quite fair and very moderate. We are just going on board. No accounts of our *Ariadne*. I shall write to you in a day or two from Emden or the Weser.'

'Bremen Lehe: December 28, 1805.

'MY DEAR SOPHIA,—I feel the highest satisfaction at being able at length to tell you that we are safely arrived on this shore. Nothing could have been more fortunate than our passage, and all our calamities were to begin after having anchored in the Weser. We reached it on the afternoon of Christmas Day, but the passage is rendered so intricate by the number of sands which are found on either side, that the convoy did not consider it prudent to attempt this without the assistance of pilots. These (for what reason we at present know not) have never made their appearance, notwithstanding repeated signals, by which means we have been put to our shifts. The night before last was a most unpleasant one, or rather the morning. We were roused about two o'clock by the confusion occasioned by our having dragged our anchors and run foul of another vessel. The negligence of our honest crew suffered the business to proceed to this extremity before they were apprised of the vessel having drifted. The wind had risen unpleasantly high, and the snow nearly deprived us of our sight, the faculty we are on such occasions most in need of. However, we parted after giving each other two or three hearty hugs, which did not materially hurt either of us; at the same time both vessels drove, till we were fortunate enough to find her anchors hold. This was certainly fortunate, for the breakers were not at the time above three cables' length astern of us—no great distance, I assure you—and as the surf was beating high from the violence of the weather, we should certainly not have been well received on the shoals. But we rode it out in close society during the remainder of the night. In the morning we found that our anchor had fixed upon the cables of the vessel we had so wrongly handled. You may judge how agreeably I was surprised on hearing from some men of the artillery who had jumped on board us during the fray, we being the larger and possibly the stronger vessel, that James [1]

[1] His second cousin, James Alexander Gomm, son of the Rev. William Gomm, of Bramdean. He was the same age as William Gomm, and was in the Artillery. He died at Bramdean in 1816.

was with them. I have as yet only had an opportunity of hailing him. We were both of us well pleased at having parted when we did. We had some difficulty in getting into this harbour, which is about ten miles up the river from the place we anchored at. We were obliged to cut our cable to avoid the fate of a larger vessel which had just run upon the sands. As the morning was fine and without wind, there is no doubt of the crew, which consisted of 500 men, being saved; but the vessel may be lost or much damaged if the wind rises. I shall not say anything more on the subject of our little adventures, which, however, interested us at the moment. They only serve to convince us that it has been rather owing to a good Providence than to our own wits that we are here in safety. In the weather we have had it was almost impossible to err, notwithstanding which one of our fleet, the *Helder*, ran on shore near the Texel; we have heard nothing further of her. It was a fine night, and we have great hopes that the crew have not only been saved but preserved for the King's service by our frigates. She had half the 5th Regiment on board. The truth is that the greater part of the vessels employed on this service, at least a very heavy proportion of them, are perfectly unacquainted with these seas, and the crews which have generally been employed to the westward are as well acquainted with the Straits of Magellan or the river of the Amazons as with the North Sea and the Weser. Certainly our vessel is a very fine one, but I can say nothing for the crew. But enough of this. We have reached the shore much more happily, I believe, than England expected we should, and I admire the firmness and enterprise of the Government in not giving way at the first ill-success, if we are at all in request here. I am afraid to speak to you yet of our poor *Ariadne*; we have as yet had no communication with the shore or harbour. She may be here, and we may still be the same regiment we have long had the reputation of being. May Heaven grant it be so!

'P.S.—31*st*. There has not been a possibility of my sending this off since we arrived. . . . The ship with the 5th

on board has just got off the sands. We expect to land to-morrow. It was very cold when we arrived; it has since thawed, and the country is a sea of mud. While I am writing (10 P.M.) it blows a gale, or rather a hurricane; but we are very safe in the harbour. I trust none of our friends are off the Dutch coast. The Hambro' papers mention to-day the loss of several vessels of our fleet. You may, of course, have heard it all. Not a word of the *Ariadne*. Adieu! May you all spend as happy and merry a Christmas as I wish you. . . .'

'Bremen Lehe: January 7, 1806.

'MY DEAR SOPHIA,—At length I am allowed the satisfaction of telling you that we are all landed; but it was only yesterday that the brigade of which the 9th forms a part came on shore. Since I last wrote to you circumstances have taken place for which we are even now at a loss to account. We received the order five days ago to disembark, but were shortly after directed to remain on board. At the same time, all the shipping which had secured itself as much as possible from the weather, by running every vessel dry upon the shore, has received orders to furnish itself immediately with a fresh supply of water, and to be ready to return to England at the first notice. It has been reported that this is in consequence of the further successes of the French, of which we have received no authentic accounts. But it is scarcely doubted by any one here that everything is as bad as it can be in Bohemia. It is said that the Emperor of Germany has made peace,[1] the Emperor of Russia retired in consequence, and that the King of Prussia has undertaken to prevent the French from approaching the Elbe or Weser, for the purpose of course of allowing the British Army to return unmolested. God forbid that any of this report should be founded upon truth! We are unfortunately the youngest brigade; that is,

[1] On December 15, 1805, was concluded the treaty of Vienna between Austria and Prussia; one condition of which was that Prussia was to take possession of Hanover; and on December 26, 1805, France and Austria concluded the treaty of Presburg.

the general officer who commands us—General Hill—is the youngest in the army here, consequently we have been the last to disembark. At the same time, we have hopes that we shall shortly move up the river, and that we shall experience no disadvantage from this circumstance. The army is all on the right bank of the Weser, and we are the right of the whole—that is, the furthest from the scene of action. This is so far fortunate, as I believe nothing has been done yet; and, provided it does not continue too long, as our men will have time to recruit themselves after their long confinement. They have been on board nine weeks. They are, however, very healthy. I am sure you will all partake in our joy at hearing (which you must have done before this time) of the safety of our friends of the *Ariadne*. They are every one of them prisoners of war at Valenciennes. This is the only authentic intelligence we have as yet received. What has become of the ship, whether they were wrecked, or how taken, we know not. It is a grating reflection to us, that we have lost the flower of our regiment—Colonel de Berniere—and the principal officers before we enter the field, for they certainly cannot join us again for a long time, if at all, while we are in Germany. The whole of the Grenadier Company is taken. At the same time, in comparison with the accounts we had too much reason hourly to expect, we were overjoyed at this intelligence. You must have seen in the papers, after the first sailing of our division, an account of two vessels having been wrecked upon the Noorder Sands, near the Texel, the one a brig, from which all were saved, the other a large ship, in which all perished except fourteen. I never mentioned it to you, but from the moment those accounts arrived the safety of the *Ariadne* was almost despaired of. If the accounts were correct, she was the only vessel missing whose size and number of the crew corresponded with those mentioned. These vessels have not been accounted for, and we should be inclined to set it down as entirely false, if any end could be assigned to so cruel a forgery. We have still a small vessel missing. We have no apprehensions for her safety, but we fear that she has returned

to England, so that the force with which we first left the country is reduced from 1,000 to I fear less than 600. I believe I have already told you that my own company was on board the *Ariadne,* and that I ought myself to have been with it. How fortunate I am in escaping, if we are to be actively employed here! We have saved the colours by a singular good fortune. It is always customary to lodge them on board the headquarter ship, and the *Harriet* happening to be so at Falmouth, on account of Colonel de Berniere having left the regiment for a few days, they were brought from the *Ariadne*, and have remained on board our vessel ever since.

'8*th*.—I have just been reading the Hambro' papers which arrived here this day. They bring intelligence of a cessation of arms having been agreed upon for the space of three months, during which time no alterations or reinforcements are to be made in the armies on either side. We are all included in this treaty. It is supposed that it will terminate in a general or at least a continental peace. I hope not, for the sake of England and of Europe. There can surely be no peace at this crisis which has not universal slavery for its basis. It seems probable that we shall remain as we are until something fresh transpires, which we may with great reason expect before the three months have passed over our heads. I very much fear that we shall, from these circumstances, remain in our present quarters much longer than we wish. Not that they are by any means bad—very far from it; but we can scarcely call ourselves in the country, and it would be shocking to return home without having had an opportunity of seeing more of it. This place is called Lehe only upon the map; it is a large village; we find everything in it that we require for convenience, and even sometimes for luxury, although we have long ago renounced all pretensions to the latter. The people are subject to the King, and therefore well disposed to us. We are here at present without any money, and the Commander-in-Chief has in consequence issued orders that the soldiers should be supplied by the people, until money can be had, with a certain allowance of provisions, for which they will

be repaid by the heads of the department. However, you will easily understand that the people will not be gainers by this system, which, at the same time, is the best possible to be adopted; not that they can suffer much by it, but there will always be little excesses committed among soldiers as well as other people on these occasions. The people are perfectly good-humoured, and they have been so schooled in hardships during the last few years that what might be termed delicacy in us in a saucy country is only decency here. The French were in this town for two years and a half, during which time the inhabitants were forced to supply them with everything they required at free cost; and as it was here that the English were expected to land whenever they thought proper to send a force into this country, the requisitions they made were in proportion heavier than in most other parts. We are, however, always inclined to search after something that can merit our approbation in the midst of all the excesses the French have been guilty of throughout Europe, and it gives us pleasure to find the people unanimous in their accounts, that setting aside their extortions their behaviour was for the most part decent and becoming. The people talk very little English in this town, which I am glad of. I am endeavouring to learn whether their German is good; otherwise it is dangerous. The master of our vessel amused us highly in the report he gave us of the inhabitants the day before we landed. He had come on shore for provisions, and being neither a wit nor a linguist, he began by addressing them in plain English, but he found them all so sulky and ill-disposed to the cause that not one of them would speak a word of English for him, and he was obliged to return as empty as he went. When first we arrived, the snow was deep on the ground. Several days after it thawed, and we have had neither snow nor frost since, which we are told is, and should naturally conceive to be, uncommon at this season. We have reason to regret this circumstance, for you have no conception of the state of the roads in this temper of the weather. We landed at the village of Giesendorf, at the opening of the creek which you will find

marked upon the map, about four miles from hence, but our march to this place was really an undertaking. It is not sloppy mud, but a sort of clay, which, I am convinced, has something to do with the powers of the loadstone, for I was often in danger of leaving my boots behind me. I am sure Mr. Bolt would agree with me upon this subject. We are told the country is equally bad further on. The part we are in is a perfect plain, and the water is only retained by dykes. However, bad as the road is, I would willingly undergo a long march if it could be allowed us. Horses are to be had very cheap, and as forage will be allowed us, we all intend furnishing ourselves if we move forward. Provisions of every description are cheaper than in England, though dearer beyond comparison than they were a short time back. I assure you I am obliged to put my German to the proof in my own defence. It is very seldom that I find French of use to me here; this I am not surprised at. I am very much at a loss at present, though perhaps not quite so much as some of my neighbours, and this, I assure you, is no small encouragement to me. I am determined to take every opportunity of exercising the little I am in possession of, and as they are not so *mal-honnête* as our honest countrymen, who burst out into a hoarse laugh whenever they hear a stranger talk English, I allow myself more liberty than I probably should do were I in Mr. Beckerdorff's situation. I have as yet heard nothing of him. Tell aunt I have found her map already of infinite use. I assure you it shall not appear to disadvantage when you see it again. At Deal I pasted it upon canvas, and made a case for it. It is my constant companion when I read the Hambro' paper, which renders the latter as interesting as it is instructive, not from its comments, for I believe it is wholly under French influence, but for the language. I have not told you, my dear Sophy, how good a sailor I have become. I had no sea sickness worthy being called so during the whole time I was on board, and I assure you I have been fifty times indebted to your little present and its contents for this; it lends more courage on such occasions than I could possibly have con-

ceived. And now, my dear Sophia, I must leave off, for I have already squeezed so much into this unfortunate sheet of paper, that whenever I open it I despair of your ever being able to make head or tail of it. Indeed, I scarcely hope to be forgiven by aunt after all her admonitions, particularly as I recollect hearing her express her disapprobation at all criss-crossing. I hope when you write you will say something of Henry, though I cannot hope that he has yet arrived in England. The post leaves here only twice a week, which is the reason of my detaining this. I have just room to beg my best duty to aunt, and everything you can say kind from me to our dear Miss G. Compliments to Mademoiselle de Montmolin. Your very affectionate brother, 'W. M. GOMM.'

'Bremen: January 24, 1806.

'MY DEAR SOPHIA,—Before I attempt to account to you for my being here, I must acquaint you with the joyful news we received yesterday by express to Lord Cathcart, that the French had broken through the conditions of the treaty with Austria, and that hostilities had again commenced.

'It is supposed that the King of Prussia has, therefore, declared himself. Heaven grant it may be so! The people here are as much pleased with this news as ourselves. I dined yesterday at the *table d'hôte*; the intelligence arrived during dinner, and was most welcomely received on all sides. I assure you it is not altogether self with us, although I confess this had no inconsiderable share in our well-wishes. There is also another report here, which it is unnecessary to tell you we all hope may be true. It is, that the Brest fleet have ventured out and have been completely defeated—or rather exterminated, if the report be true. I am afraid to think of the number said to have been taken or destroyed, it gives the whole such an air of improbability. I dare say you are anxious to hear how I got here. I got leave to accompany our paymaster, who has been obliged to come here on business. . . . It really was not a trifling undertaking, both on account of the dreadful state of the roads, which are almost equally bad

the whole way; and, more than all, the wretched horses they furnish us with on the road—having none of our own, from the too great probability hitherto of our returning home. We are obliged to make the road considerably longer, in order to supply ourselves with horses and guides, which are stationed at regular posts, though their attendance is not so regular, being obliged to wait one or two hours always at these places. We arrived here yesterday afternoon, and I fear my "knight's" business will admit of his returning so soon as to-morrow. I shall, therefore, run about the town all day, particularly as we are obliged to dine at half-past two; and, of course, nothing *can* be done after that at this season of the year, except the play, which I went to last night and was much pleased with, particularly the music. . . .'

The next letter to his sister is dated Yarmouth, February 8, 1806. It announces their arrival there that afternoon. Their destination from the Weser was the Downs, but the wind did not permit of their getting there. They were met on landing by the news of the death of Mr. Pitt, which had occurred on the 23rd ult. This letter is interesting as showing the difference of the old days of slow posts and sailing vessels, as contrasted with our present frequent posts, telegraphs, and steam vessels.

Captain Gomm says to his sister that he had not received a single letter from home since he left; but, he adds, 'I am not surprised at it. About three letters have been received by the whole regiment since we have been out; they must have been all detained in England, under the supposition that we should be upon the return before they could reach us.'

The troops had to remain on board several days, crowded as the ships were, awaiting orders from headquarters. Fancy troops now going across to the mouths of the Elbe and Weser, and in an absence of six weeks no letter being received from home. They seem seventy years ago to have been about on a par, as far as means of transport and communication were concerned, with the Romans when they came over to England

eighteen centuries ago. The want of regular continental posts, the absence of telegraphic communication, the fleet waiting about for a favourable wind to come over the Channel, and then not being able to make its destined harbour, seem to take us back into another age as we read these letters.

Captain Gomm soon returned again to his studies at High Wycombe, and many of his letters to his sister at this time were written in French, in a style which shows that he was completely at home in the language. He passed his final examination at the College in November, and obtained his certificate.

(*Certificate.*)

'Royal Military College: November 28, 1806.

'At a half-yearly examination, held this day, Captain William Gomm, of the 9th Regiment of Foot, a student at the Senior Department from February 1, 1805, appeared before a board assembled for that purpose, and having after a strict examination in the different branches of study, acquitted himself to the perfect satisfaction of the Board; and the Lieut.-Governor and the Commandant having reported satisfactorily as to his general conduct, we the Commissioners and Members of the Collegiate Board present, certify that Captain Gomm is qualified to serve on the General Staff of the Army.

(Signed) 'EDWARD, Field-Marshal.
'WILLIAM HARCOURT, General.
'ADOLPHUS FREDERICH, Lieut.-General.
'ROBERT BROWNRIGG, Quarter-Master General.
'J. G. LE MARCHANT, Colonel, Lieut.-Governor Royal Military College.
'W. BUTLER, Commandant, Jur. Department Royal Military College.
'H. DOUGLAS, Major, Commandant Senior Department.'

After Captain Gomm left the College there is a break in his correspondence with his sister for a few months, and his next letter shows that he has again proceeded with his regiment on active service to Denmark.

Mr. Canning had at this time been placed in the Foreign Office, and he desired to assist Russia and Prussia against

France; but Napoleon had been too quick for him, and in June 1807, after the battle of Friedland, the Emperors met at Tilsit, on the Niemen, and concluded the Treaty of Tilsit. One of the main though concealed objects of Napoleon in concluding this treaty was to paralyse the trade of England. Mr. Canning learnt that, by a secret article in this treaty, the Danish fleet was to be seized for the war by France, and all the ports of Prussia, as well as of Dantzic, were to be shut against the vessels and trade of Great Britain. The English therefore directed the force which had been sent out under Admiral Gambier and Lord Cathcart to bombard Copenhagen.

From this time forward Captain Gomm appears to have served continuously upon the Staff of the Quartermaster-General, until the close of the great war, except during the retreat of Sir John Moore in the Peninsula, when for a short time he rejoined his old regiment.

'Philipshagen, Island of Rugen: July 16, 1807.

'My dearest Sophia,—By the greatest good luck I have this moment met with a messenger charged with despatches from Mr. Pierrepoint in England, and cannot lose so good an opportunity of giving you news of our arrival at last. Indeed, we only reached our destination this morning. We have had contrary winds continually, but no bad weather. We land here because the vessels cannot go up to Stralsund, from whence this place is about thirty miles. Lord Cathcart set off this morning for Stralsund: the King of Sweden is there; the French are without the gates of the town at a short distance, but it is rendered so strong by inundations and otherwise that it is not expected they will be able to take it. All our German legion, amounting to about 18,000, have marched there; the King, they say, has about 12,000. They all regret our not arriving sooner. What we are to do now that can retrieve all that is passed we have no conception. Unless the armistice between the grand army and the French is broken off, we can surely do nothing, although their numbers can do

us little injury in our present situation. The King, they say, and the Swedes have been doing deeds of romance, and he has exposed himself whenever it was possible. It is to be hoped that all his generous efforts will not be frustrated, however much it is to be feared, by the conclusion of a peace. The conduct of the Russians appears to us very extraordinary; it is certain they have suffered immense loss in the late battles, but they have by no means been *beaten* into a peace, and it is the general opinion that the Emperor was disgusted with the dilatory measures of our Cabinet; indeed, Sophia, this is a sad disappointment to us all. It is the second time that poor Lord Cathcart has had all his measures, and I all my castles, frustrated and tumbled to the ground. You see we talk quite despondingly, and I really fear we shall return very soon. I am left at this place to wait for orders from Stralsund of any description that may arrive. You see they are determined to take good care of me, but I hope to Heaven they will let me go on to Stralsund and see the little there will be to be seen before I show my face in England again. You shall hear from me, depend upon it, by every opportunity. I suppose it is to forward the stores, etc., that I am left here, as this duty belongs to my department. Another is gone to remain at Bergen. I confess to you it is not a small disappointment to me; but we must only hope for a change of luck. I have no horse at present, and I should find a difficulty in doing anything required of me till I can get one; a few days will determine whether this will be necessary. Heaven send it may! for certainly the safety of the whole civilised world may be said to depend upon the conduct of the Russians and Prussians at this moment. I am greatly hurried, and have written almost unintelligibly; but you, I know, will decipher it if it is possible. . . . I must tell you that all our troops are in the best health possible.

'P.S.—If you direct to me as Assistant Quartermaster-General, serving with Lord Cathcart's army, it will find me; don't send anything under cover to Lord Cathcart, because it will be giving him trouble to no purpose.'

'Dramendorf, Island of Rugen: August 1, 1807.

'MY DEAR SOPHIA,—I am afraid you will be surprised at not having received a second letter from me earlier, but I have not had any opportunity of sending off a letter since the day I landed, when I was so fortunate in meeting with a messenger. We are as yet very inconveniently situated in this particular; for although there must undoubtedly have been several opportunities of sending letters by ship sailing hence to England, there have as yet been no steps taken to give us notice.

'I was placed the other day in a situation that was the most tantalising that can possibly be imagined; for in one of my rambles round this part of the country upon duty, whom should I meet upon the high-road but another messenger, who was making the best of his way with despatches for England, and could not wait a moment; so that in future I mean to carry in my pocket, whenever I go out, a letter ready sealed and directed, to pop into the hands of the first gentleman of this description that I may chance to meet. We are equally ill off with regard to receiving letters. None of us, I believe, have received any; so that, although I feel very anxious to hear from you, I am not at all surprised at its being otherwise. . . . I am very glad I have had an opportunity of going into Stralsund, and I have been very much gratified with all I have seen there. I had a great curiosity to see the King of Sweden. I arrived too late to be introduced to him, as most of Lord Cathcart's staff were; but I saw him on the parade afterwards. From all that has passed, it appears that he means seriously to defend Stralsund to the last. Lord Cathcart and the whole staff are in this island; only three battalions of the German legion are in Stralsund, and as a reinforcement has just arrived to the King from Finland, it is supposed that those three battalions will also join the camp which is now assembled at Gnatz. They marched upon the ground that very day, and your humble servant has had the supreme felicity of sketching the encampment and the ground above it, under a broiling sun the whole day. The weather

has really been hotter here ever since our arrival than I ever felt it in England. We have certainly been more exposed. I assure you we have a very busy time of it here, and there have literally been very few moments in which I could find time to write to you, had fifty opportunities offered of my sending a letter. The French have not yet begun the siege—that is to say, they have not yet opened their fire upon the town. It is said they expect a large train of artillery from Lübeck. It is the opinion of every one that Stralsund may hold out, if the King chooses to defend it—as he has hitherto given us reason to suppose he does—until the winter sets in, and then it will be difficult to keep the ice constantly broke, and the enemy may take the place by storm; but it is so surrounded by water, and of such an extent, that at this season of the year it is considered impregnable. I dare say you will recollect it is the town which the famous Wallenstein, the Austrian general in the Thirty Years' war, declared he would take, although it were bound with chains to heaven. He was forced, notwithstanding, to raise the siege, and the day is still kept as a day of rejoicing. I happened to be in Stralsund the very day of the anniversary, and I scarcely spoke to a person belonging to the town who did not immediately give me to understand that this was "Wallenstein's Day." It likewise stood a famous siege when defended by Charles XII. against the three crowns, and its gates have many a proud inscription in consequence.

'The Swedes have taken my fancy very much. It is said their dress is very nearly the same that was worn in the time of Gustavus Adolphus. This, you may naturally suppose, forms a very striking contrast with our fancy dresses and fashions of the day; and, to tell you the truth, I think the comparison is far from being to their disadvantage. Some of them look as if they were setting out for the wars in Palestine. Their soldiers appear highly respectable, and their officers—those we have had to do with—are men of education and excellent manners. We have certainly seen the best of the flock, as they are those who are always about the King.

'I long very much to have an opportunity of giving Colonel Douglas an account of all I have seen that could interest him, although as yet I have very little information of any description to communicate. I am at present so busy in sketching the country that I have not a moment to attend to anything else. Will you, however, mention to him, with remembrance from me, that I shall take the first opportunity of writing him the little information I can at present give him? and pray tell him, too, that with the best inclination in the world, had I even had all my time to myself, I should scarcely have had an opportunity yet of sending a single letter off.

'*4th.*—Still we have no intelligence of a conveyance of letters to England. In the meantime we find you have sent us a most formidable fleet into the Baltic, and the latest papers mention that a very strong force is upon the point of sailing from England; we almost begin to hope there is something more in this than we are aware of. It would give me very great pleasure if, before I return home, I could have it in my power to pay my aunt Brühl a visit, but I am afraid the thought itself is almost romantic. I certainly should like to see as much of this part of the Continent before I return as possible, and even to go as far as Petersburg, if the state of affairs should unfortunately force us again to return to a state of inactivity. We have learnt a great deal of the state of affairs in Poland from a Colonel Bathurst, a son of the Bishop of Norwich, who went out as a volunteer to the Russian army. I find it is to be done with so little expense, and it is in every respect so feasible, that if ever a war should break out again upon the Continent, and we are not actively employed, I shall dun you all for your voices in getting me leave to go over as a volunteer. By-the-bye, I inquired from him about the young Count Woronzow, and I was very glad to hear that he had not been wounded at Eylau, as General Benson had reason to fear, but that really he had received a kick from his horse. Will you remember me very respectfully to the Count and Countess when you see them? . . . Have you heard from

Henry since he arrived at Gibraltar? By-the-bye, some letters arrived with all this news the other day—but only two or three, so that I had plenty of disappointed ones to keep me company.

'6*th*.—I have only a moment to spare, having just heard that despatches are immediately going off to England. We are told that we are all going to return; I know not what truth there is in the report. . . .'

It may be mentioned as a proof of the small and compact character of Capt. Gomm's handwriting at this time that the whole of the above letter, and fully fifteen lines more which are omitted as not being likely to be of general interest, are written on three sides only of an ordinary square sheet of letter paper.

'Head Quarters before Copenhagen; August 21, 1807.

'My dear Sophia,—I hear there is a possibility of a vessel sailing for England to-morrow. I shall not lose the chance of letting you hear from me, more particularly as you will probably be at a loss to imagine in what part of the world we are, after my having said in my last letter that we expected immediately to return to England. Little did I think when I wrote then that we were intended for this enterprise, which is certainly finer, and meets our ideas more than anything that we have yet been engaged in. We sailed from Rugen about a week ago, and upon our arrival here we found the English force disembarking. We of course knew before we sailed that Copenhagen was our destination; but whether we were to come as friends or enemies remained a doubt, which, however, was in part removed by the Crown Batteries opening a fire upon us as we passed before the town to the place of debarkation. But when in the morning we saw the troops landing without any appearance of opposition, there was a sort of contradiction in all this that we were at a loss to account for. The truth of the business is that the Danes have been taken so completely by surprise, and so little time had they to prepare themselves for our reception, that literally

the whole 17,000 men—which they say the English infantry consists of—were on shore before they could bring down their force to oppose them. They certainly were in the act of doing this when we landed. It is said the garrison does not consist of more than 5,000 or 6,000 men, but a very small number are required to present a very formidable opposition to an army in the act of landing. We disembarked at a village near Charlottenbund, which is a palace belonging to the Queen, about five English miles from the town towards Elsinore. I think the landing began on the 15th, and the whole were on shore in the course of the following day. I did not land till the 16th. The six battalions of the German Legion were kept at anchor in Kjöge Bay, under Lord Rosslyn, to await further orders. Of course Mr. Harrison is with them. Only the light artillery and cavalry came with Lord Cathcart. The army invested the town on the 16th, with very little opposition; and the siege is now going on with all possible expedition. All supplies are cut off from Holstein by means of our fleet in the Belt. The passage is very well watched; as an instance of it I shall only tell you that the Crown Prince has been taken in crossing over from this island, but as it happened before hostilities commenced he was not detained. The Royal Family have all left the island. I am sure you will all be very much pleased with the manner in which the Princesses were treated the day after the town was invested. Their Royal Highnesses applied to Lord Cathcart, requesting he would grant them a passage through the lines, which was of course granted them, but in the handsomest manner, and the Guards paid them military honours as they passed along their front. I am sure Miss Goldsworthy will say after this that we shall one day become rivals of the Spaniards in gallantry. You must not forget either to tell Mdlle. Montmolin this story, that she may entertain some hopes of our honest countrymen in this respect; but, upon second thoughts, we must not make too much of it, because it will appear such a rarity, and we hope to have many opportunities of acting a similar part before we see you again. You all know, of course,

the object Government had in view when they sent out this force; but almost all pity the situation in which Denmark is placed—the more resistance she makes, the more we must admire her spirit. But we are at the same time convinced that, situated as we are with regard to France, the measure adopted by our Government is most wise and politic. The country about Copenhagen is beautiful. One naturally expects to find the land in a high state of cultivation near the capital of a State, but Nature has had a greater share in it. The whole island, by all accounts, is equally beautiful. The weather is remarkably fine, and all the troops are in the best health possible. We are quartered in villages and private houses—I mean gentlemen's seats, of which there are a great number in the neighbourhood of Copenhagen, and all of which have been deserted by the owners, who have all fled into Copenhagen. Some of these houses are fitted up in the most elegant manner, and the grounds about them in the highest order. The officers are in general quartered in these houses, so that it is to be hoped as little damage will be done as possible. Sir George Ludlow is quartered in the Palace at Frederiksberg, on the right of our line; but, strange to say, he is worse off than any of us, for everything has been moved off, so that he has nothing but the empty house left him, whereas in almost all the private houses the whole of the furniture has been left. And so little did they expect a visit of this sort from us, that in many instances they appear to have left their houses with as much as they could scrape together in the course of ten minutes, leaving the rest to its fate. We understand the house we are in belonged to a countess, but we have not yet been able to learn the name. The house is called Tuborg: it is on the high road from Charlottenbund to Copenhagen, about two miles from the town. I do not know whether you have maps upon a sufficiently large scale to enable you to find out my quarters, but you will be very well able to judge where it is. I have got my horse quite safe, I am happy to tell you. . . .

'21*st*.—I have just heard that despatches went off for England yesterday. It is a pity they do not give us some kind

of notice when anything of this sort is to take place, but there is certainly the most profound secrecy observed upon the subject. However, as a fresh brigade arrived last night, under General MacFarlane, they will of course send off intelligence of it immediately. I shall, therefore, send this to headquarters to take its chance. I have dated my letter from headquarters, but Lord Cathcart is at a short distance in our rear. . . .'

His next letter is a short one to his sister, dated 'Before Copenhagen, September 2, 1807,' in which he speaks of having to relate only the dry details of a siege in which are no great risks or hardships to describe. He adds:—

'We have been very fortunate in cutting off supplies from the town, and you may very soon expect to hear of its being in our possession. . . . You have, of course, heard that Stralsund has been evacuated by the King of Sweden. He was threatened by an insurrection among his own people after we left him, which rendered it impossible for him to make longer resistance, however it might have been before.'

'Camp before Copenhagen: September 7, 1807.

'My dear Sophia,—Copenhagen has capitulated. Our Grenadiers marched into the citadel at five o'clock this morning. The terms of the capitulation are that the whole of the fleet—consisting of twenty-two sail of the line and smaller vessels, altogether forty in number—together with all the naval stores in the arsenal, are to be surrendered to us as prizes. Lord Cathcart's son sets off to-morrow with the despatches relating to this capture, and I could not let him go without letting you into the secret, although I make no doubt you will have heard the news—although possibly not the *true* news—before this comes to your hands, for our good English newspapers have been wonderfully beforehand with us hitherto, having told us the other day that Copenhagen had already fallen; but we are not a little offended with their saying that everything had been done by Admiral Gambier, and

poor Lord Cathcart and the army were never once mentioned. However, you will find we have all had a finger in the pie, and I believe everything has been done that was required or expected from us; and now that we have no further occasion to steel our hearts against all the feelings of humanity, I think it may be allowed us to reflect upon the scenes that have just passed before our eyes, and indeed they have been most distressing. For three nights successively the town has been bombarded without intermission; it was in flames a quarter of an hour after the bombardment began, and continued so in a slight degree the whole of Thursday. But at night the timber-yard took fire, and the conflagration became much more general during the whole of Friday; and the wind, which was high during the whole of the time, carrying the flames directly over the town, increased it to such a degree that on Friday night the appearance was rather that of a volcano during a violent eruption than anything I can conceive. The sight was dreadful, but it was truly magnificent; the church of Notre Dame, the cathedral and the church, which made the finest appearance in the town, fell to the ground at five in the morning, and nothing is standing but the bare foundation. Do us the justice to believe that we felt the horrors of this scene in all its extent; and imagine us at the same time redoubling our exertions as the calamity increased, and throwing showers of shells towards the parts where the fire raged most to render ineffectual the means employed to extinguish it. But now, indeed, I believe all human efforts were vain had the wind continued; and setting this aside, the fire from our batteries was so tremendous that no means could be employed towards checking its progress. It was owing to these circumstances, after more than one third of their town had been burnt, that the Danes sent out a flag of truce offering terms of capitulation, which the whole of yesterday and to-day have been employed in arranging, and which are at length brought to a conclusion as I have stated to you. It will give you all pleasure to learn that the women and children, and most of those incapable of bearing arms, had flocked in great

numbers to the island of Amager, on the other side of the town, where our fire had no effect; but I am sorry to say there are melancholy stories enough left to relate, which would be as painful for me to recall to my recollection as for you to hear told. We have not been able to learn what numbers have fallen in the town—they must be considerable. While I declared to you that we were not without feelings while we were in the most vigorous discharge of those most painful duties, I should not have forgot to mention our commander-in-chief, for he little deserves to be omitted here. I believe he has suffered more than any one man in the army. The idea of a bombardment is shocking to humanity. It has been the practice among nations of late to open a siege by this measure; it was done at Valenciennes; it was done at Dantzic; it is always done. But though it is sanctioned by the laws of war, it is always more becoming, and a measure of more enlightened warfare, to attack a town in any other way than by distressing the inhabitants; and particularly in the instance of a capital which is supposed to be the seat of everything that is worthy of being respected. But in many instances the time and means necessary for a regular attack are wanting, as in the present one, where time is everything to us. The season is so far advanced that the most speedy and effectual means of reducing the place were necessary to be employed. Nothing could be a greater proof of Lord Cathcart's feelings on this occasion than his having given orders before the bombardment commenced that the firing should cease the moment a trumpet sounded from the place, and from the moment the flag of truce appeared not a shot was fired; in short, he has taken every opportunity of showing a moderation which would not have been practised in a thousand instances of the same nature. And we rejoice that it is so; for although our situation as a nation may be such as to warrant strong and even violent measures, none can contemplate with indifference the situation of this country: they have not lost their honour. Nor could we have done less than we have done, considering our numbers and means. It might have been more prudent in them could they have reconciled it

to themselves to have submitted to the terms proposed before the bombardment, which, I understand, were much more favourable; in which the fleet were only to be taken as a pledge, and the damage done to the country by our army—which is considerable—to be made good. But these terms were rejected. I am in hopes I shall soon be able to give you an account of the town; at present I have only been as far as the citadel. It was at once a fine and a distressing sight to see our troops take possession of the citadel. We could not feel proud of it, for no great difficulties had been encountered. We certainly should have attempted everything immediately if the bombardment had not succeeded in reducing the town. Sir Home Popham has taken a very active part in the proceedings of the treaty.

'I am almost afraid aunt and Miss Goldsworthy will have nothing more to say to me after this account; but we must endeavour to convince you when we meet that we were only mischievous from a good principle.'

'Copenhagen: October 19, 1807.

'MY DEAR SOPHIA,—We are at this moment all embarked, and as the armistice is at an end this day we shall of course move out as far as we can, although the wind is so contrary that we can hardly expect to make much progress on our passage, so long as it continues in the same quarter. As you will be expecting us all home immediately, I take advantage of the best opportunity. I think often of letting you know that there is a chance of my not paying you a visit so early as you may have at first supposed. You have no doubt heard in England of the intention of sending part of our army to Sweden. The choice has been left me of remaining with this part, and I hope you will not disapprove of my having accepted of the offer, although we shall not meet quite so soon as we have hitherto been led to expect. At the same time the sending this force to Sweden is, I know from the best authority, not at all decided upon at this moment. I believe it will depend upon the humour in which we find the king when we arrive either at

Malmö or Helsingor, for it is the intention that the whole fleet should in the first instance proceed to the Swedish coast. At all events if any force remains I shall be of the party. I was this morning addressed in the kindest manner by General Spencer; he told me he had received a letter from Windsor mentioning me, and that it would at all times give him great pleasure to be of any service to me. This is particularly fortunate for me, as he is to be of the Swedish army, and to have the command of the only brigade of British that remains; the rest are all German. I confess I have been very idle in not having written to you since we took possession of Copenhagen, but I thought at that time there was a certainty of our meeting so soon that I flattered myself it would be much more pleasing to you to receive an account of the town and our proceedings from your humble servant in person than by writing. I had likewise meant to bring you home, each of you, a few knick-knacks, among the rest a little music for your ladyship which is much admired here, which has never yet been published in England—some operas of Pär, etc. I hope they will not be out of date by the time I present them. I do not like sending them in any other way, as there is still so great a chance of our meeting soon. . . .

'Thank Miss Goldsworthy a thousand times for her kindness in mentioning me to General Spencer, for I am sure it has been through her means that he has been spoken to about me. . . .'

The diversion to Sweden evidently was not effected, since his next letter shows their speedy arrival in England.

'Yarmouth: October 30, 1807.

'Dear Sophia,—We are again upon English ground, after rather an unpleasant passage. We anchored here this morning. Lord Cathcart arrived last night, and proceeded to town this morning before our arrival; very few of the vessels have arrived yet. I set off for town to-morrow morning, and as there are four of us we propose posting it. I shall therefore

not be in town till Saturday, and I cannot propose to pay my respects to you at Windsor till Monday or Tuesday, as it will be necessary for me to report myself to General Brownrigg and Lord Cathcart. I will call immediately on General Benson. I am in haste for fear of missing the post, so that I must only beg of you to give my best love to aunt, and remember me most kindly to Miss Goldsworthy.

'Your affectionate brother,

'WILLIAM GOMM.'

Politically speaking, there are few chapters in our modern history of which we as a nation have more need to be ashamed than this wanton destruction of Copenhagen. It was no excuse that the conduct of Napoleon was a determined proscription of England from the face of European society, so far as his influence could extend; although the 'frank exposition' of their motives which the ministry put forth in the name of the king, says that 'His Majesty feels confident that, in the eyes of Europe and of the world, the justification of his conduct will be found in the commanding and indispensable duty paramount to all others among the obligations of a sovereign of providing while there was yet time for the immediate security of his people.' The exposition proceeds to say that intelligence had been received that Napoleon was determined either to borrow or to take the whole Danish fleet, and that Denmark would not be sufficiently powerful even if willing to resist such a demand, consequently his Majesty had proposed to take temporary possession of that fleet, but as in the most unwarrantable way Denmark had refused so kind an offer, 'His Majesty was reluctantly compelled to draw his sword' (in other words to invade the territory of a nation which was not our enemy, to kill its subjects, to destroy its capital, and to seize its fleet), 'acting solely upon a sense of what was due to the security of his own dominions, and not desirous for any object of advantage or aggrandisement to carry measures of hostility beyond the limits of the necessity which has produced them.'

The reply of Denmark was most dignified. It speaks of the

long-observed rigid neutrality of their conduct hitherto, and comments with virtuous indignation on the unjustifiable and sudden attack upon an undefended coast. It says: 'The Danish Government saw the English ships of war upon their coast without even the conjecture that they were to be employed against Denmark. The island of Zealand was surrounded, the capital threatened, the Danish territory violated and injured, before the Court of London had made use of a single word to express the hostility of its feelings. Europe will with difficulty believe what it will hear. The barest, the most violent and cruel object, has no other foundation than some pretended information or rumour of an attempt, which according to the English ministry was to have taken place in order to draw Denmark into a hostile alliance against Great Britain.

'Upon these pretended grounds, which the least degree of discussion would have removed, the English Government declared to the Court of Denmark in the most imperious manner, that in order to secure its own interests, and to provide for its own safety, it would leave Denmark no other choice than a war or a close alliance with Great Britain. And what kind of alliance did they offer? An alliance the first guarantee of which, as a pledge of submission, was that Denmark was to deliver up all her ships of war to the British Government. There could be no hesitation as to the alternative that was to be adopted. Placed between danger and dishonour, the Danish Government had no choice. Attacked in the most unexpected and dishonourable manner, exposed in a separate province, and in a manner cut off from all the means of defence, and forced into an unequal contest, she could not flatter herself with escaping a very material injury.

'But let impartial critics judge whether England was under the political necessity of sacrificing another State without hesitation to her own safety, a State which had neither offended nor provoked her.

'The Government of Denmark believes it has a right to reckon upon the interest and justice of the Cabinets of Europe,

and hopes for the effects of the same on the part of those illustrious sovereigns whose objects and alliances have served the English for a pretext to the most crying act of injustice and violence which even in England every noble and generous mind will disown, which deforms the character of a virtuous sovereign, and will ever remain a scandal in the annals of Great Britain.'

It is fortunate for the English student that few such pages of dishonour mar the annals of her history; and it is not till seventy years have passed that a similarly disgraceful act has been perpetrated in her name. The invasion of Afghanistan in 1878–79 offers almost an exact parallel. Then, as now, the only possible pretext for the invasion was 'the security of our empire;' then, as now, we were really striking at the supposed machinations of the powerful (French then, Russian now) by crushing the weak, to whom then, as now, we offered the alternative of an alliance or a war; then, as now, we said we had no objects of aggrandisement, while then we seized a fleet, and now a frontier; then, as now, the enemy could do nothing against us without the aid of the great foe behind, which in neither case came to help its cat's-paw; then, as now, we tried to make the success of our soldiers cast into oblivion the iniquity of our cause, and by the praises of the army to drown the remonstrances of outraged humanity; and lastly, when at the opening of Parliament the question of our justification in their going to war was brought on, then, as now, the ministry was supported by large majorities in both Houses. The parallel indeed seems most complete, with one important exception, viz. that in 1808 we were at war with the great foe behind Denmark, whereas in 1878 we were at peace and actually on a friendly footing with Russia, the favourable reception of whose mission formed our only possible complaint against Afghanistan.

From Captain Gomm's letters from the spot we have seen how thoroughly distasteful to our brave soldiers was the work which had fallen to their lot, and it may readily be believed with what astonishment they heard that the Government had at

the opening of Parliament in 1808 proposed votes of thanks to them from both Houses. It is no light compliment when the rising ambition of a young soldier is flattered by such a letter as the following :—

'Gloster Place: February 1, 1808.

'Sir,—I take the earliest opportunity of transmitting to you a copy of the resolution of the House of Lords and of those of the House of Commons dated January 28, 1808, which contains the thanks of both Houses of Parliament to the army lately employed in Zealand.

'In communicating to you this most signal mark of the approbation of the Parliament of the United Kingdoms of Great Britain and Ireland, allow me to add my warmest congratulations upon a distinction which you have had so important a share in obtaining for his Majesty's forces, together with the assurances of the truth and regard with which

'I have the honour to be, Sir,

'Your most obedient humble servant,

'To Captain Gomm, 'Cathcart, L.G.
Assist. Deputy Quartermaster-General
on the late expedition to the Baltic.'

Captain Gomm was, however, too honest and straightforward a man not to see through the gilding of the pill. He writes thus to his sister when he is cautioning her not to give him more credit than he deserves :—

'By-the-bye, my Lord Chancellor has done nearly the same thing with a great many of us lately, and as I know how dangerous the example of the great is, I think it necessary to give you this warning. Now, after all, I think there must have been something *selfish* in this proceeding of the Parliament of which I have already given you an account. I have been considering a long time what could have possessed them to sell their thanks so cheaply, and, indeed, I think it is only doing justice to their understandings to suppose that they mean to gain some credit to themselves in allowing us so much, and that they are going upon the old principle "the *less they deserve* the more merit is there in *your bounty*!"'

CHAPTER V.

1808.

IRELAND—ALMOST JOINS SIR JOHN MOORE'S EXPEDITION TO SWEDEN—ASSISTANT QUARTERMASTER-GENERAL—EXPEDITION TO SPAIN UNDER SIR A. WELLESLEY—LANDS AT MONDEGO BAY—BATTLE OF ROLIÇA—BATTLE OF VIMIERA—CONVENTION OF CINTRA—LISBON.

ON his return from Zealand Captain Gomm had to rejoin his regiment, the 9th, which was then quartered at Mallow in Ireland. His letters to his sister from the country which he calls 'the house of bondage' are chiefly occupied with his anticipations of getting his majority (which, however, he did not get till three years later), and his anxiety again to proceed on active service. In April 1808 his aunt, Miss Jane Gomm, and her inseparable friend Miss Goldsworthy, appear to have resigned their appointments at Court, and having so long lived together at Lower Lodge, Windsor, wisely determined not to separate, but took a house together at 11 Chapel Street, South Audley Street, London, whither they moved before the end of the month, bringing of course Captain Gomm's sister Sophia with them. Miss Goldsworthy had been at the Court with the Princesses ever since 1774, and Miss Jane Gomm from not long after; it was quite natural, therefore, that after so long a union they should decide on living together. From the first every letter of William Gomm's to his sister had ended with affectionate messages to Miss Goldsworthy as well as to his aunt.

In his letter dated from Mallow, May 1, 1808, Captain Gomm says: 'It was only two or three days ago that we heard Sir John Moore had sailed, or even that preparations were carrying on for the embarkation of his force. It does

infinite credit to the Ministry. General Brownrigg has written to us to say that there is an idea of a reinforcement shortly following this force, and that, should this be the case, he will endeavour to make room for us among the number. I do not know how it is, but we always manage to come in *at the close of the hunt*. . . . I have written to General Brownrigg to request he will allow me to serve in this expedition in some way or other, and to request his interest for procuring for me an appointment on the Quartermaster-General's Staff, or on any other in which a vacancy may be most conveniently found. I am principally afraid, however, that I am too late in my application, for everything has been done with such admirable secrecy that we were not aware of any intention to send out a force to Sweden till within a very few days, or rather we supposed that the project had been abandoned altogether. There is no service I am more anxious to be employed upon, and no general under whom I am so desirous of serving, as Sir John Moore. However enterprising the projects of Sweden and England may be thought in this instance, I think they are far from being romantic, and if that hireling Emperor of Russia and his banditti are made to starve in Finland, I shall be much more gratified if I can be favoured with a sight of it than by anything I can learn from hearsay. At all events, I think we cannot go too far in assisting the King of Sweden, while we provide at the same time for our own security.'

It was a fortunate thing for Captain Gomm that his wish to join Sir John Moore's expedition to Sweden was not fulfilled, for from beginning to end it was a most unsatisfactory affair. Sir John Moore was sent out in command of an army which was to go to Gothenburg to aid the King of Sweden against his enemies. No specific plans were made, but Sir John was sent out to Gothenburg, not exactly to be under the King of Sweden, but to do whatever he was asked to do by the king, '*if* Sir John thought proper, and *if* he was ordered to do so from England.' Nothing could be more indefinite, and a fiasco was inevitable. The army on arrival at

Gothenburg was not permitted to land, and the King of Sweden insisted positively that it should be absolutely under his command. He then ordered Sir John Moore first to attack Zealand, and then to land at Viborg to threaten St. Petersburg; and, losing his temper when Sir John pointed out the impossibility of the schemes proposed, the king finally placed him in arrest, ordering him not to leave Stockholm without his permission.

Sir John Moore was not, however, the man tamely to submit to such indignity, and he accordingly at once, with the connivance of the British Minister, Mr. Thornton, who had immediately on hearing of the arrest remonstrated with the Swedish Government, escaped from Stockholm to Gothenburg, where he embarked; and the wind fortunately proving favourable, at once set sail and brought the ships, from which the troops had never disembarked for more than two months, back to England. Here Lord Castlereagh received him at first coldly, but the King and the Duke of York approved highly of his conduct.

That Sir John Moore was justified in resisting the demands of the King of Sweden was soon made more clear by the increasing insanity of that monarch, who, before another year had passed, was deposed by his people, no hand being raised in his defence.

It was not, however, for service in Sweden that the force then assembling at Cork was destined, but for another part of Europe and against another of the great Emperor's machinations. In the previous October, under a so-called treaty with Spain for the partition of Portugal, the French army had entered Spain *en route* for Portugal; but in the early months of 1808 Spain found that Napoleon's plans were directed more against herself than against Portugal. But though deserted and betrayed by their leaders, there still seemed some patriotism in the Spaniards, who were against the French, although Charles IV. and Ferdinand VII. had basely abdicated, and had actually handed over the monarchy of Spain and the West Indies for a home and a pension.

Part, however, of the nation, beginning with the Asturians, loyally rose against the Government of France, and sent deputies to England to ask for assistance.

In June, Napoleon brought over his elder brother Joseph, who was a pliant tool in his hands, from Naples, and proclaimed him King of Spain; and the English Government therefore determined to despatch a force to the Peninsula to assist the Spanish patriots.

It was this expedition that Captain Gomm was now about to join, although no rumours of it had as yet reached the regiment in their 'house of bondage.'

'Mallow: June 1, 1808.

'My dear Sophia,—Our destination is changed, and I hope you will agree with us in thinking for the better, though we shall probably not have an opportunity of meeting so soon as we promised ourselves. General Brownrigg has written to us to say that as soon as the transports arrive at Cork, we are to sail in company with the 40th and 91st Regiments, now on board at that port, in the first instance for Gibraltar. The prospect of meeting Henry so unexpectedly, I assure you, is not the least pleasing part to me in this arrangement. The General further says that upon our arrival at Gibraltar we may expect to be immediately employed upon active service; and some of us are romantic enough to flatter ourselves that the coast of Spain is ultimately our point of destination. The country is stated to be in a sad state of disorder, but unless we are confident of being received *à bras ouverts*, such an attempt I should think would not be made. I am more glad than I can express to you at the prospect of being employed in the Mediterranean. If I meet with General Spencer, I shall "boo" very indefatigably for a staff appointment, or Miss Goldsworthy's kindness in procuring me an introduction to him, and so flattering a one, would be quite thrown away upon me. I have received an answer to my application to General Brownrigg, very civil, but as no reinforcement was for the present fitting out for the army in Sweden, it was not in his power to comply with my wishes immediately. I am sorry I did not bring my

Spanish books with me when I left England. I would give anything for them now. I do not think I have forgotten what I had learnt of it, and the prospect before me would be an additional inducement to improve.'

'Mallow: June 11, 1808.

'General Hill, who takes the command of the force going from this country until they arrive at Gibraltar, has received his final instructions from the Duke of York; and all are ready but the ships.

'You have seen in the paper a list of the regiments under orders from this country; they amount, I should think, to about six thousand men. It is said Sir Arthur Wellesley is to command (which, by the way, I am very glad of); but I should think he would join us at Gibraltar.'

'Wednesday morning, 8 o'clock.

'We have just had intelligence by express that the transports have arrived. We march to-morrow, and embark on Friday.'

'Cork: June 19, 1808.

'The regiment embarked on Friday, and I go on board to-day.

'We have three very fine transports allotted to us: the *Defence*, *Active*, and *Oxford*. The *Defence* is the headquarter ship, and I am fortunate enough to be on board it; but they are all remarkably fine vessels. We are all ready to sail immediately, unless some alteration is made in the disposition.'

[Here follow great complaints of his having been deceived and falsely promised a staff appointment. He is very indignant at the dishonesty of this.]

'On board the *Defence*, Cove of Cork: June 25, 1808.

'MY DEAR SOPHIA,—With great joy I have it in my power to tell you that I am appointed Assistant Quartermaster-General to go with the expedition.

'I received the notification of my appointment yesterday from General Calvert, the Adjutant-General. I believe I am

indebted to the Duke of York's goodness in this instance. I cannot express to you how happy I feel in going out as I do with so many more advantages and with so much more flattering prospects than in the last instance, my regiment being appointed to the same service, and being fortunate enough to have made the acquaintance of several principal officers employed, General Hill in particular, who I am convinced will show me every kindness. I am not acquainted with Sir Arthur Wellesley. I dare say you recollect Captain Langton and ——, who were examined at the same time as myself. They have been appointed by General Brownrigg to serve on the same staff, and Captain Campbell likewise.

'Of our destination I shall say nothing; we all conclude it is Spain, and I may add we fervently hope it. However, should it even be for a longer voyage I shall scarcely feel less happy. I believe we are as romantic in our expectations as ever knight errant of the fifteenth century was.

'Sir Arthur is in Dublin, and is expected here every day; on his arrival we shall be able to form some idea of the time we may expect to be detained here. There is a report that we are to wait for more transports. I have been most fortunate in meeting with a horse. . . .'

'Cove: July 3, 1808.

'With regard to our destination I can say nothing more with certainty; if the late important news from Spain and the Mediterranean is confirmed, there is no doubt of our going there. Heaven send it may be so!

'The *Donegal*, of 74 guns, is our convoy. The *Resistance* and *Crocodile* frigates likewise accompany us; they are all here, and we seem only to be waiting for Sir Arthur, who, we understand, is waiting in Dublin, until he receives his final orders. Indeed, reports are in every one's mouth of his being hourly expected; but this has continued for the last ten days.

'My reliance on General Hill's kindness was not ill-founded. He commands the expedition, in the absence of Sir Arthur; and the *Crocodile* has been allotted for him and his staff; and he has offered to take me in the same ship with him, provided

there is room. There is the more kindness in this, because the officers of the Quartermaster-General's Department form no part of his staff, and it is therefore quite voluntary.'

'Cove: July 9, 1808.

'I am now going to write to you, I think I may say, positively for the last time previous to our sailing. Sir Arthur Wellesley came down to Cork yesterday; he is now here, and we are given to understand that everything is to be on board to-night, and that to-morrow we shall sail. I think nothing can detain us beyond Monday.

'The astonishing news we have lately received from Spain has set us all agog; and I may safely venture to assure you that Spain is going to import a whole family of Don Quixotes with the English army. I have great hopes that General Spencer has taken with him several regiments from Gibraltar, among others the 6th; and in this case, I have no doubt, Sir Hugh would allow Henry to go with him on the Cadiz expedition.

'Is not Miss Goldsworthy delighted with her Spaniards? I do not know anything in the world that gives me so much joy as the idea of going among them. It is the finest cause we can be engaged in, and it is of all countries that which I wish most to see next to Italy. Really, I don't know what is too extravagant to expect, if things go on as they have done by the late accounts; it looks as if Europe was going to throw off her 'nighted colour while this extraordinary mortal was hastening to his decline. When he once begins to fall he will topple headlong. In case of separation our vessels have received directions to rendezvous in Tangier Bay. I should hope, however, that we shall be landed somewhere in the north of Spain.'

'At anchor, Mondego Bay: July 28, 1808.

'We arrived here on the 26th; our passage was tedious, but far from being a bad one; we did not experience one day's bad weather, in the language of sailors. The whole fleet have arrived perfectly safe, and, I am happy to add, in perfect health.

We are among friends; nothing can exceed the joy the people testify upon our arrival. No French in our neighbourhood, and we have reason to believe they have concentrated their whole force in Lisbon; they are said to amount to 13,000; we are upwards of 8,000. Sir John Moore is coming out immediately with the whole Swedish army. There are said to be 8,000 Portuguese at Leyria, thirty miles from hence, waiting to join us; regular troops they are called, but we are contented if they are an armed mob; they prove the disposition of the country. Nothing can exceed the inveteracy they express against the French; and the Portuguese are jealous of the success that is attending the Spaniards. To detail to you the numerous advantages that attend us at our setting out would be to write you a long letter, and this I have not time to do. It is reported Sir Hew Dalrymple will command in chief. How fortunate for Henry, if it is so. Sir A. Wellesley went several days ago to Lisbon, to consult with Sir C. Cotton, who commands the squadron off the port; he is expected hourly, and our landing is expected to be the immediate consequence. My horse is in better order than when it went on board. I know not when this will reach you, or when it will leave this; I have ten minutes of idle time, and whenever you get it, it will be a pleasure to hear that our undertaking is attended with the most flattering prospects, and our cause the finest, I believe, that ever employed English army before. General Spencer does not join us here; they say he is off Lisbon with his force; I will endeavour to learn something more about him before I seal this. General Beresford with his army is coming to join us from Madeira. The weather is delightful. I have time to write to no one else now; but you can communicate with those I should write to, had I time.

'29th.—I have just heard that General Spencer's force is expected to join us here immediately. Sir J. Moore's force is hourly expected. Lord Burghersh arrived here yesterday with despatches (important ones, it is thought) for Sir A. Wellesley; he is likewise hourly expected from Lisbon. There is a packet making up on board the *Donegal*, but it is by no means certain

when it will leave this. It is confidently asserted that Sir H. Dalrymple will command; I am delighted with the idea of meeting Henry in this way. It is not certain whether we land upon Sir Arthur's return, or wait for the reinforcements that are expected. Adieu.'

'Camp before Vimiera: August 19, 1808.

'Despatches are this moment going off for England, and I have only time to give you a few words; which, by-the-bye, it would be unpardonable in me not to do, since we have had an *affaire*[1] with a division of the French army; and you will, of course, be very anxious to learn how we all are.

'They opposed us, in our march from Caldas and Obidos, on the 16th. They were posted at first in the plain behind Bombanal. On our advancing, they ascended the heights behind the village, and waited our approach. They were attacked in this position, and driven from it. They made several efforts to regain what they had lost, but without success. They were driven along the heights a distance of three or four miles, and in the evening they were in full march for Lisbon. By all accounts, their numbers did not exceed five thousand; our whole army more than doubles their numbers, but we had not an equal number engaged. We have suffered very severely.

'I have this instant received an order to repair to head-quarters, which prevents my saying ten words more. H. and myself are quite safe and well. The 9th have behaved in the most gallant manner. I fear we have lost our invaluable colonel. Adieu.'

'Vimiera: August 22, 1808.

'The French attacked us yesterday with a force of 15,000 men, and were completely defeated. We have two generals prisoners, with all their artillery. The numbers of killed among them is great. I must refer you to the *Gazette* for all the particulars of this business, in which, depend upon it, the English have not only supported but added to their character. Henry and myself are quite well. Colonel Walker is also

[1] The battle of Roliça.

quite safe. His regiment distinguished itself principally. I hope Henry has heard of this opportunity of writing.

'P.S.—Sir Hew Dalrymple is arrived here.'

This arrival of Sir Hew Dalrymple was an instance of the muddle then made in the military command by the supersession of one officer by another. Sir John Moore, greatly to his indignation, after his unfortunate affair in Sweden, had been sent out with an expedition to the coast of Portugal, in which he was second to Sir Harry Burrard. On arriving off the coast, Sir Harry Burrard landed, leaving Sir John Moore in command of the force with directions to proceed to the southward and to be at hand to support the advance.

Sir Harry Burrard arrived on the field at Vimiera, and, taking the command from Sir Arthur Wellesley, prevented the pursuit of the retiring enemy. The very day after the battle Sir Hew Dalrymple, hastening from Gibraltar, superseded Sir Harry.

Immediately afterwards Sir John Moore arrived, and he, waiving his pretensions as senior officer, stated that if active hostilities recommenced, Sir Arthur Wellesley was the right man from his knowledge and experience to have the command.

With such divided and constantly varying responsibilities, it is hardly to be wondered at that confusion prevailed; fortunately, however, for the English army, the defeated French appeared more anxious to get safe back to France than to renew hostilities, and it was under these circumstances that the convention of Cintra was concluded.

By this treaty the French general Junot was allowed with all his forces to evacuate Portugal. The English were to transport them to France, and they were then to be free to operate in whatever part of Europe their services were required. They were not allowed, however, to carry off the immense amount of booty which they had collected in the country, and which they had reluctantly to disgorge. This convention was received with great dissatisfaction in England.

'Camp, Sobral de Monta Graço: September 1, 1808.

'The ship which brings you this letter will also bring you the accounts of the conclusion of our campaign in this country; the treaty between the heads of the two armies was finally settled, we understand, yesterday. The articles of the treaty are not made known among us; and if they were, you will be able to collect a more detailed and exact account of them from the public prints than I could give you. I only hope you will all be satisfied with them; if they are at all favourable to the French, I think it serves to convince us that we are intended for some other important service, because we are in a situation now to dictate whatever terms we please in this country, in a very short time. I believe I have only written to you twice since our landing, and at each of those times in such a hurry that I barely gave you to understand Henry and myself were well. This time they have given us a little longer notice. We are to send in our letters at eight o'clock; it is now five, and I have only this moment heard we have an opportunity of sending letters. H. is at some distance from me, as he is in camp, and I have no means of sending to him; but as the notice is given in public orders, I think he will hear of it. However, to make sure of your having recent information respecting him, I can assure you I saw him two hours ago perfectly well, and not looking at all the worse for the fatigues of the campaign. Sir Hew Dalrymple has not yet decided. nor even hinted to him, what he means to do. Henry, however, called upon him the other day; he received him very kindly, and has been very attentive to him several times since. He has been refused by the Duke of Cumberland to have his son with him as A.D.C., and it is not, I think, at all improbable that he will take Henry into his family again. I think you must by this time have received accounts of our second action with the French, and I hope we have contrived to put John Buli in good humour with us as far as we went. However, it is very probable he will expect that we should have gone further; and I must confess that for once we cannot call him unreasonable. I believe he will have the greater part of us on

his side. Our success was certainly brilliant, but we lost the opportunity of making it substantial; and the opinion is almost universal that it might have been decisive.

'Sir Arthur Wellesley had only to do with the favourable side of the picture; but it has been sadly daubed. Sir John Moore has joined us with his whole force; we have now an army of 30,000 men in this country. We are all praying that Spain or Italy will be our next destination. We march from hence to-morrow, but I believe we are not allowed to enter Lisbon for some time. I dare say I shall have another opportunity of writing to you soon. I meant after I had finished this to have written a long letter to Colonel Douglas, but I have just received an order from headquarters to assist in copying a plan of the country immediately.

'I believe you will not find out where we are from the top of my letter; we are about ten miles from Torres Vedras, and about twenty from Lisbon.'

'Quetus: September 19, 1808.

'I have never written to you yet since we landed that I have not been hurried, and now that I have a little time allowed me more than usual I find I have so much to say to you that I scarcely know how to begin; and I shall not have told you half of what I mean to do when I have ended. With regard to the military part of our proceedings, I have this afternoon for the first time got a peep at the despatches copied from the *London Gazette*, and they give you a fuller account of all that has passed than I should be able to give you; and as I do flatter myself we have no character to clear in this instance, any illustration of these accounts would be impertinent. Besides, though I allow you all credit for feeling a sufficient interest in our public successes, I know you have not quite so much of the Roman lady about you as to be entirely dead to feelings of a more humble description; and therefore I think I cannot begin my history with a piece of news more acceptable to you—if I am not unfortunately the retailer of it—than Henry's appointment to the situation of major of brigade. As you will in all probability not under-

stand this rank, I must explain it to you. The pay and rank are the same as those of aide-de-camp; the officer has the rank of major during the time he holds the employment, and he is not considered as generally belonging to the general's family so much as the aide-de-camp. The situation is more independent. Henry is attached to General Acland, whom neither he nor I knew before his appointment, but he is very highly spoken of.

'I have not seen H. since his appointment; it is now, I think, ten days; we have been with opposite parts of the army. To-morrow I go into Lisbon, where I have every hope of seeing him. This appointment has lighted upon him in the nick of time, for the day after it, I think, his regiment received orders to march to Almeida, a garrison town on the frontier, nearly 200 miles from hence, and they are now on their march.

'I have only passed through Lisbon once since we have had possession of it. I regret very much not having been able to be more in the way of seeing the French during their embarkation; but I have lost no time, whenever I have had an opportunity, of making whatever remarks I could upon them. You will, I dare say, think me a curious being for making such a confession; but I really cannot help telling you that the lower orders of them (I mean the soldiers) appear to me very amiable; they are civil, obliging, and gallant to a degree, and I don't believe half the stories that are told of them. The Portuguese are by no means favourites with us, I assure you; nothing can exceed the joy they express at our being among them, and their delivery from the French; but the homage they pay us is of so abject a cast that we cannot help losing all respect for them; and although it is only proper that they should show every mark of respect to the English, since it is to their exertions they owe everything, they do it in so shameless a manner, at the same time that they have shown so little activity in the cause which should rouse all their energies, that they give by this means the strongest proof of their being a weak and degenerate people. They certainly are so in a

very great degree, and they have many unamiable features in their character into the bargain. You will say I am determined not to be the panegyrist of this people; but be this as it may, I must give you an account of an acquaintance I have made here within these few days, which I think will serve to convince you that my abuse is not altogether prejudice, or at least that it has bounds. At Lumiar, the last quarters we were in, about four miles from hence, myself *et un de mes camarades, nous sommes entrés en soldats, dans la maison du Comte de Penicho.* We did not certainly lay siege to the sweetmeats all at once, as I have already confessed to you was the case in a more inhospitable climate; but *nous nous sommes très bien établis* before we learnt who our noble host was. However, we have had no reason to regret this piece of decision on our part, as it has been the means of securing us a most valuable acquaintance; for although the household deities of the ancients were not more honoured than we have been in every house we have passed through, we have never fallen into such good hands before. The Count is rather of an advanced age; he is thoroughly a gentleman. I cannot describe him to you by comparing him to any one you know, because I have seen nothing in England like him. If you recollect having read the "Cid," he put me more in mind of the father of Rodrigue than anything I have seen or read of. He has a large family of six daughters and two sons, all young. It is singular that neither the Countess nor any of the family, except himself, speak French; so that we had very little conversation with them, except when we wanted to make them laugh, and we seldom failed when we attempted to address them in Portuguese. I must tell you I have grown bolder with my French since I saw you last, so that I found myself quite at home with the Count. It was something very striking when he took us over his house, and showed us those parts of it which had been plundered by the French. It has contained some furniture exceedingly rich, and some excellent paintings, of which they have deprived him. All this we cannot help regretting when we witness it, but the tameness with which they submitted to all

these indignities as a nation is almost a bar against every feeling of regret even in these instances. We lived three days with the Count, and when I was ordered to join the camp forming here, he first of all told me he remembered when very young having rode out on a little pony, under the care of a servant, to see the English camp, formed upon the ground we now occupy at Quetus, under the Count de Lippe, in the year sixty-two; which, he said, delighted him very much. And then, he desired that whenever I went to Lisbon I should find him out; as he was willing to show me a great deal of attention; for his public business keeps him in town during the week, and Sunday is the only day he is allowed to spend with his family. So much for our romance, and I hope I shall shortly be able to give you the sequel to it.

'I believe we are to have a large camp formed here of five-and-twenty thousand men; how long we are to stay here, or anywhere, I know not; but something tells me, we have more to see before we return home; and as we have not burnt our fingers yet, I dare say you will all think it very excusable in us that we should wish this to be the case. I am writing now in the Palace of Quetus; the royal family used frequently to reside here, and since their departure Junot has had it fitted up in very superb style, for the reception of the Emperor, who had been expected here. He has collected the plunder of other of the palaces and principal houses, and assembled it here. We have several of us been laughing together this evening at the strange sort of life we have been leading lately; sleeping almost indifferently, under the roof of a palace, a shed, or a bush, but I believe we never were happier. Sir Arthur Wellesley has left us, to our infinite regret; I was with his division of the army the whole campaign; his departure was very sudden and unexpected.

'21*st*, *Lisbon*.—I am writing at this moment in H.'s room; he has been obliged to go out very early this morning upon duty.

'I shall write to you again soon; and I dare say we shall be at rest, now the army is halted, but we have of late been such perturbed spirits that the old maxim of there being a time

to sleep and a time to fight, a time to eat and a time to write, has met with very little respect among us. Henry, by the-bye, is going to be detached with his brigade a short distance from the rest of the army. I should not think it would be for any length of time. We are going to-day to find out James, and make him give us a dinner, as he has a mess, we understand, in town, and we shall in the evening go together to the opera. . . .'

CHAPTER VI.

1808–1809.

UNDER SIR JOHN MOORE—SENT ON TO EXAMINE ROADS INTO SPAIN—ADVANCE—NO LETTERS—RETREAT TO CORUNNA—DEATH OF SIR JOHN MOORE—DANGEROUS VOYAGE HOME—CANTERBURY—COACH ACCIDENT.

SHORTLY after the Convention of Cintra, Sir Arthur Wellesley sailed for England; and immediately after the news of that convention reached England such a clamour arose that Sir Hew Dalrymple was recalled, and the command of the army was left in the hands of Sir Harry Burrard. At the same time Sir John Moore was appointed to the chief command of an army to be employed in Spain. Lord Castlereagh signified to Sir John that 'the force placed under his command, amounting to 20,000, was to co-operate with the Spanish armies in the expulsion of the French from that kingdom.' A further force of 10,000 was sent under Sir D. Baird to Corunna. Napoleon was at the same time massing an immense army to descend upon Spain to wipe out the disgraceful defeat of Dupont's army by the Spaniards at Baylen, and that of Junot by the English at Vimiera. He was then pouring 200,000 French troops past the Pyrenees, and the disorganised Spanish Junta had nothing but raw levies to oppose him. The task assigned to Sir John Moore seemed hopeless in the extreme, but he laboured hard to overcome the great difficulties of his position. He decided to effect a junction with Baird's army by land in preference to taking his troops by sea to Corunna, chiefly because it was known that in Galicia it would be impossible to procure supplies and transport for so large a force. But the Portuguese were ignorant even of their own country, and no correct

information could be obtained about the roads; and the army, being new to regular campaigning, were quite unused to contrive expedients for such a march—added to which was the great want of ready money.

'Lisbon: October 13, 1808.

'Sir John Moore marches immediately into Spain, at the head of twenty thousand men, detached from this army; and H. and myself are both fortunate enough to be among the elect. H. some time ago (at least a fortnight) set out after his brigade on the road to Elvas; and by the accounts I have received of his progress, from different eye-witnesses, he must have reached his point before this. He has been most fortunate in his weather; he travelled alone—at least, accompanied only by his servants and baggage. But he is experienced in this sort of adventure, since you well know that he travelled seven hundred miles, in the same manner, through the wilds of Canada, and all for pleasure.

'I yesterday received instructions to proceed this morning on the road towards Almeida; a division of the army marches in this direction, and they are not at all satisfied with the accounts given them of this route. The high-road is through Leyria and Coimbra, turning the chain of the Estrellas by the left, but this road is too long to be undertaken by us at present, and we expect to meet serious obstacles in the road we propose following. My directions are, therefore, to discover what means there are on the road for the quartering of troops, so that they may be under cover after each day's march; and how far the country is practicable for the passage of artillery. The French came with one column in this direction, but their artillery was very light. This is to be my route; through Santarem, Torres Novas, Thomar, Cardigão (making all inquiries respecting the high-road through Abrantes to Cardigão); from Cardigão to Castel Branco, Guarda, and Almeida, and return by Sabugal and Peñamacor to Castel Branco. From Cardigão there is likewise a road more north, and passing over the ridge of the Estrellas; about this I am to make all inquiries. From Castel Branco, by a third route, crossing the Tagus twice, through Garvião to

Abrantes, where I meet the division that is to undertake this march. Now, I think you will allow that I have no small work on hand, and as I am to be as quick as possible about it, you need be under no apprehensions of my passing my time in the mountains of the Estrellas, *à la Quichotte* in the Sierra Morena. My equipment is as follows: I take two servants, one for myself, the other for my horses; and I have an interpreter (a deserter from the French), an Italian, who speaks French, Portuguese, and Spanish, so that we shall get on fluently. I take two horses, a Spaniard, and an English one; fortunately, they are both excellent. I have a mule for my baggage, so that we are all mounted, and at seven o'clock this morning we start. Adieu, therefore, for the present; you shall hear from me in the course of my peregrinations. . . .'

The letters to his sister here break off, the next being a short note dated from Portsmouth, January 26, 1809, after the voyage from Corunna. It is only from scattered memoranda written on different occasions in later years that one can gather what part Captain Gomm took in Sir John Moore's campaign.

Owing to the wretched state of the roads and to the impoverished state of the country, Sir John had found himself obliged to divide his forces, for it was not till after many of the regiments were actually in movement that it was reported that the Portuguese roads north of the Tagus were impracticable for artillery. Colonel Lopez, who had been sent by the Spanish Government to assist Sir John Moore, confirmed what Captain Gomm reported after he had examined the line. It was this that compelled the despatch of the artillery by the circuitous western road by Elvas to Salamanca, while the rest of the army marched in three columns by the two banks of the Tagus, and by the coast road to Coimbra. Sir John Moore himself says, 'The army ran the risk of finding itself in front of the enemy with no more ammunition than the men carried in their pouches; but had I waited until everything was forwarded the troops would not have been in Spain until the spring, and I trust that the enemy will not find out

our wants as soon as they will feel the effects of what we have.'

On November 13, when Sir John Moore reached Salamanca, news of the entire defeat of the Spanish armies by the French were brought to him, and he found that instead of having a victorious Spanish force to cover his advance there was not a Spanish soldier in his front, and the enemy were reported to be at hand in overwhelming numbers. The armies with which he had been ordered to communicate had been dispersed to the winds. He had no fresh orders from home, and no communications from the Spanish Government, while from the rumours which were prevalent it appeared as if the different detachments of the British army were advancing into the arms of the enemy. Under these circumstances Sir John Moore sent out for information of the whereabouts of the enemy's forces at Valladolid. A memorandum inserted in Sir William Gomm's handwriting in Fullom's 'Life of Sir Howard Douglas' shows the part he bore in this matter:—

'The measures in progress for assembling the British army at Salamanca towards the close of the autumn of 1808 gave occasion to a "raid" of which I am tempted to insert a brief account among these pages.

'The principal column marched through central Portugal to its point. A second column took the route by the Tagus and Madrid. A third (under Baird) landed at Corunna and advanced by Lugo and Astorga.

'The first column was reaching its point, while the others would require several weeks more for the completion of their march. In the meantime the French had routed the Spanish armies with which we were advancing to co-operate, and Sir John Moore received intimation from the Supreme Junta assembled at Aranjuez that they had broken up from Burgos, and were advancing in force upon Valladolid and Salamanca. This intelligence, if confirmed, would render imperative the counter-march of the three British columns without a moment's delay into Portugal and Galicia.

'An officer of the Quartermaster-General's Department

was called for to ride forth, not in quest of adventure, but of reliable information on the momentous question mooted, towards Valladolid, and the lot fell upon the reporter. A Spanish officer was given me for companion, and in the grey of a murky November morning we set out together courier-wise upon post-horses, sadly jaded, poor fellows, by incessant to-and-fro-ing of *estafettes* at that busy period.

'The distance from Salamanca to Valladolid is between sixty and seventy English miles of perfectly flat, open country. Something short of half the journey was thrown behind without occurrence worthy of note, and then my Castilian comrade was moved to cry, "Hold, enough!" and the route was pursued by me alone.

'A flight of an unusual description soon arrested my attention, looming in the distance over the landscape without tree or shrub. When neared it proved to be my Lady Prioress and all her nuns escaping from French capture out of Valladolid, and hastening to take refuge in Salamanca. A little gentle *parler* ensued, in the course of which I was recommended to turn and do likewise; but the spirit of adventure, or of curiosity, or of whatever else proved more potent, and it was on, on for the next meeting. And this turned up in the shape of the military governor of the city, vowing that the French had entered *en masse* at one gate while he shot out at another, and that going further ahead would be a brainless proceeding.

'This was the governor who was treated with such little ceremony in poor Sir John Moore's report home. The general, however, prevailed no better than the nuns, and as the shades of evening came on Valladolid was entered; the whole city as silent and as empty as Pompeii at the same hour till the Alameda was reached, and then a shadowy group was descried, suddenly brought to a stand by my approach as by that of a mounted apparition. These were the municipality of the city, expecting another visit of a thousand French cavalry levying contributions and requiring news of us. When informed that I came from Sir John Moore, the corregi-

dor instantly lifted me off my horse, threw his cloak round me, and hurried me off to his house, where he boarded and bedded me for four or five hours and packed me off on my return before the dawn, very stiff, furnished with a written report of the limited extent to which the Junta's information was confirmed. By evening I was entering Sir John Moore's quarters with the report. Colonel Colborne (now Lord Seaton), then military secretary, looking half incredulous and something more at first, of the fact of Valladolid having been really reached, but hastening with the letter to his anxious chief, secured him a balmier rest through its contents than he had for many a night enjoyed. It is needless to add that its information outweighed that furnished by nuns and captain-general, and that the columns advancing viâ Astorga and Madrid were not precipitately thrown back, the one upon Portugal, the other upon Corunna, nor the assembling of the army at Salamanca frustrated through false or exaggerated reports gathered from a distance.'

In the meantime, the French, although not actually occupying Valladolid and so threatening the English position at Salamanca, had pushed on, led by Napoleon in person, to the walls of Madrid, which surrendered to him on December 4. This was unknown to Moore at the time, and it is not to be wondered at that his information of the real position of affairs was halting when we find that actually on the eve of their unconditional surrender of the capital, Don Morla, the Governor, sent messengers to Moore to ask him to advance to Madrid to co-operate with the Spaniards, concealing from him the numbers of the French and the utter inability of the Spaniards to hold their own against them.

In order, therefore, to relieve Madrid, Sir John Moore decided on attempting to cut the French communications between Madrid and France, and about December 13 moved northward to the Douro. When this information was communicated to Napoleon, he at onceappreciated the correctness of the movement, and saying, 'Moore is the only general now fit to contend with me: I shall advance against him in person,'

pushed on with his wonted impetuosity towards Benavente in order to destroy him. In the face of Napoleon's vastly superior numbers Sir John Moore then commenced that most difficult of all military manœuvres—a well-ordered retreat before a superior force.

At Astorga, on January 1, Napoleon had to relinquish the pursuit and hurry back to France, leaving the command to Soult, and till the middle of January the weary retreat was continued up to Corunna. It is hard to imagine a more miserable plight than the army was in; the men were with the greatest difficulty kept in anything like order, many straggled from the ranks, tarried behind, hid themselves in houses, broke open wine cellars, and were left behind intoxicated. The sick and wounded were also necessarily left behind; much of the baggage and stores had to be abandoned or destroyed, and even the casks containing the money had to share the same fate, as the means of transport were lamentably insufficient, and even what they had was continually breaking down. The whole army was dispirited, sullen, and despondent; while the reserve, which continued obedient and orderly, was almost daily engaged sharply with the enemy. Under these trying circumstances the conduct of the brave commander shone forth with wonderful brilliancy; he was everywhere encouraging his men, praising the gallant conduct of those who so repeatedly repulsed the enemy, and did all that man could do to maintain order, and to keep heart in the men under such adverse circumstances. Captain Gomm had been ordered to rejoin his own regiment, the 9th, owing to the want of regimental officers, and it is to be regretted that there are none of his graphic letters to his sister describing this trying retreat. Before the middle of January they arrived at Corunna, and Moore's undaunted soul, though the expected transports were not yet arrived, rejected the counsels of those who proposed to open negotiations with Soult. He determined to extricate his army from its perilous position with honour, in spite of the enemy. On the evening of January 14 the transports arrived, and during

the 15th and 16th the troops were successfully embarked, after repulsing the attacks of the enemy on the 15th, and in the fierce general battle of the 16th crowning their retreat with a signal victory over the whole army of Soult, 20,000 strong.

The victory, however, was dearly won, for the heroic Moore was killed. To the 9th Regiment was consigned the sad though honourable duty of burying him on that fatal evening.

It was they who 'slowly and sadly laid him down, from the field of his fame fresh and gory;' and it was they who were the last of the British force to embark in the darkness of the night. Captain Gomm himself commanded the very last picket. A memorandum in his own handwriting is inserted in his copy of Fullom's 'Life of Sir Howard Douglas,' p. 100, against the remark about the embarkation that the movement was covered by the rearguard which held the land fronts of the fortifications across the isthmus, facing the enemy, who watched for the moment when these should be evacuated leaving the rearguard at his mercy. Colonel Douglas saw the danger, and resolved to make an effort to ward it off, which he did by making over the forts to the Spaniards. The arrangement was carried out, but not unnoted by the French, who brought up their field guns and opened fire on the transports. The terrors of the scene were heightened by the darkness of the night. The admiral signalled for the transports to make off, and more than a hundred slipped their cables, running before the wind out of the bay, and heaving to in the offing, while the rearguard mustered on the beach within the citadel. A number of the transports ran foul of each other, entangling their rigging, while some were wrecked.

Colonel Douglas waited to watch the embarkation of the rearguard, as it threatened to be hazardous—the transports being only accessible by a long pull to seaward; and casualties might have occurred if Sir Samuel Hood had not sent all his boats to bring the troops to the *Barfleur* and *Resolution* lying near the shore, which he turned into receiving ships.

'The last fragment of rearguard withdrawn from the

heights consisted of my own company of the 9th Regiment; the regiment which had just

> Buried him darkly at dead of night,
> With his martial cloak around him.

We were thus the last British remnants (I believe I was the last English fighting man) embarking, and were forced in consequence to thread the whole fleet in the turbid dark in quest of a berth. "No room, three in a bed all round," was all the answer we got. In despair striking out largely we made for a lone ship in the distance, outermost in the forest of sea-craft, and at first thought they were cruelly joking us when we got for reply, "Oh yes, plenty of room." This was the headquarter store-ship, which had been cannonaded in the morning by the French from the heights, and when deserted by its crew, compass and all, was carried out of harm's way by a mate and boat's crew from the admiral's ship, who had witnessed the desertion. We sailed before dawn. Stormy weather, but a fair wind, soon dispersed the fleet and bore us independently into the chops of the channel. Then came on a storm ahead, and tempested us about several dark days and nights of blank uncertainty as to our whereabouts. The stout mate who headed us came up to me saying, "They have left us no means of ascertaining where we are. I will keep the best look-out I can, but I know as little as you do about our actual whereabouts." At last, on the fifth morning, the mists rising in perfect calm, we recognised the point of St. Helen's abreast of us, and a dismasted frigate ahead of us gliding softly into Spithead. Our worthy mate was presently promoted by the Admiralty upon the report made to it of the gallant and seamanlike care he had taken of his unlooked-for charge.'

'Portsmouth: January 26, 1809.

'MY DEAR SOPHIA,—I lose not a moment in letting you hear of my arrival at Spithead this morning in a very crazy ship. However, I am very fortunate in being the first of the regiment that has arrived; the rest, however, are on board

ships of war and have put into Plymouth; no doubt we shall have them round to-morrow. Henry is not here; but be under no apprehensions about him, because he embarked at Corunna in the *Zealous*, a ship of the line, and I have just seen an officer arrived from Plymouth with the account of all the ships of war with the fleet and a number of transports having gone into Plymouth. He will most likely have an opportunity of paying his respects to you before I shall, not being immediately attached to his regiment. Through the kind intercession of General Brownrigg, I have been obliged to join mine ever since we left Salamanca, having become the eldest captain of it.[1] General Brownrigg is here himself, regulating the quarters of the troops. The 9th go to Canterbury; write to me there. I dare say we shall reach it in five days. Henry and myself are both perfectly well. I am writing in a great hurry, as the general has given me a job which requires that I should set about it immediately. My very best love to aunt and Miss Goldsworthy,

'Your ever affectionate brother,

'Wm. Gomm.'

After their return from Corunna the 9th Regiment remained at Canterbury, but in the middle of the year it became rumoured that they were to be sent out somewhere again. Speaking of the operations in Portugal, in a letter to his sister in June 1809, Captain Gomm says: 'We are certainly making a very grand display in that quarter, but it can only be compared, I think, to our playing the pawn game successfully in one corner of the chess-board while we are receiving checkmate in another; and as to our sending a flimsy force to gain a footing in Germany, which they seem to talk of at present, we may as well send them to Brobdingnag.'

[1] At the end of the year the regiment stood as follows. Colonel Robert Brownrigg; Lieut.-Col. Henry de Berniere; Lieut.-Col. John Cameron; Lieut.-Col. George Molle; Major Henry Crawfurd; Major David Campbell; Major Thomas Aylmer; Captain Peter Lambert; Captain William M. Gomm; and 19 other captains; 46 Lieutenants; 19 Ensigns.

When the expedition for Walcheren was being got ready in July 1809 Captain Gomm had been up to town, and on being ordered to join the staff which was to embark at Ramsgate he went down by coach. On the way they met with a mishap, which he describes in a note to his sister.

'Canterbury: July 20, 1809.

'MY DEAR SOPHIA,—As I may not chance to have an opportunity of writing before the post leaves Ramsgate this evening if I wait till I arrive there, I think I had better take advantage of a few spare moments, and give you my history so far.

'The fact is I was overturned about six o'clock this morning, and have gained a black eye by the bargain. If you had seen the vehicle before it started you would only have wondered how such an occurrence should have been put off till we nearly reached Ospringe. I should be happy if I could finish as little tragically as I have begun; but I have it left to tell you of one poor man who was killed on the spot, and two others whose legs were broken; these were all on the outside. The coachman is likewise much hurt, but I cannot feel the smallest regret at this; I am only sorry he was not a greater sufferer in the place of one of those I have mentioned, for the whole was owing to his own carelessness, or rather mischievous indifference: for he was aware when we left Sittingbourne that one of the springs had given way, but thought it too much trouble either to make an attempt at repairing it or to warn us of our situation. The consequence was that the whole weight of the carriage falling upon the fore wheels, one of these shortly gave way, and the whole came down on its side on the finest road possible, and in broad daylight. In fact, I am positive that the owners of this rotten concern were only waiting for an event of this sort to close their account with it; for on examining it there was scarcely a part either of the tackling (as the sailors call it) or body of the carriage that was not completely worn out, and from this circumstance it is reduced to a wreck. I think little short of transportation should follow such be-

haviour. We did all we could to find out who the poor young man was that it proved so fatal to; but in vain. As it is attended with so many melancholy circumstances, it would be indelicate in me to suppose that the idea of my getting a black eye in this way should amuse you, as I am confident it would under other circumstances. I must, however, assure you I never took an insult of the sort with so much good humour; for to make my luck the greater there were five persons inside the coach, and I was under the whole of them till we made use of the window to extricate ourselves. To tell you the truth, I believe I shall pass for a day or two as having been engaged in an "elegant little row," as we say in Ireland; for nobody will dream, nor shall I be able to insist upon it with a sufficient degree of solemnity, that I got it in fighting with a stage coach.'

'Ramsgate: July 25, 1809.

'When I last wrote you from Canterbury I thought there was little chance of our remaining here till this time. Here we are, however, still, and I see no chance of our sailing for some days, for the wind is directly against the fleet coming round from Portsmouth; and the naval people assure us it is not likely to change till Wednesday or Thursday, when the moon likewise changes. As this delay, therefore, has taken place to such an extent, and is likely to be continued, I cannot help thinking we are very fortunate in putting up here in preference to going with the rest of the army to Deal. I have not been over there yet, but you may imagine what it must be—a dirty hole at best, with very little accommodation of any kind, and filled at this moment like a beehive, although, I am afraid, with a less industrious population. Here we have only three or four general officers with their staff. Lords Chatham and Huntly are both here.

'My black eye, I am happy to tell you, is disappearing very graciously. I do not know whether you are much acquainted with the nature of its progress in the human countenance; but this much I may tell you, that it is more easily got than got rid of. Its retreat always is very solemn and

majestic, although on this occasion I have found it rather more nimble in its operation than is usual, and there is nothing now but its shadow left behind. . . .

'The news from Germany is too distressing to touch upon, and although we have only the French account I am afraid from the movements alone, without allowing any credit to their comments, that the Austrians have lost everything. You shall hear from me again in a day or two, at all events before we sail. Sir Howard Douglas does not know I am writing, or I am sure he would desire me to say something nice. I have not heard since from Henry, but expect to see him the moment we go to Deal.

CHAPTER VII.

1809.

WALCHEREN EXPEDITION.

'Middelburg: August 2, 1809.

'As this is the first opportunity that has been offered to us of writing since our landing, I shall not have kept you longer than it was possible to help, and this is certainly a pleasing reflection to me. Our passage from the Downs was something like one of the excursions the royal family used to take from Weymouth.

'We weighed anchor at four in the morning, and were off the coast of Walcheren at three in the afternoon of the 29th. On the 30th, in the afternoon, we landed on the Bree Sands; you will see it on the map, between West Capel and the town of Vere. It was the finest thing of the kind, perhaps, that ever was witnessed, whether we consider the force of the fleet that was collected, the judgment and good order with which the whole was planned by the navy, or the spirit and national character that was so admirably supported by the troops. It is not fair to take into consideration that no opposition was offered, because, at the time of landing, we had every reason to expect from the nature of the shore, and from other circumstances, that it would have been disputed; and it was under this idea that, when the troops were all in the boats, and rowed off from the shipping to gain the shore, they sent up a general and continued shout, that came nearer to the idea of Milton, when he describes the exultation of the fallen angels at the uprearing of their standard, than anything I can conceive. The fort of Haak, which you will see on the map, and the batteries at Vere

fired some round shot and shell, which were returned from the frigates and gunboats anchored in shore to cover the landing. The whole made up the most animating scene I ever witnessed, and nothing was wanting but some opposition at the point of landing to render it perfect in its kind.

'The fort of Haak was immediately evacuated; and an advance made late in the evening towards Vere by the 71st Regiment, or rather by part of it, was an ill-judged thing, and they were driven off with some loss. The day after, the gunboats and bomb vessels rowed up the channel, and a bombardment continued on both sides during the whole of the day, two of the boats were sunk, and some damage done to the town. In the meantime we were busy in landing the heavy artillery, in order to make an impression upon these gentlemen on the land side, as we found them so saucy. These preparations being made on our side, the town surrendered yesterday at eleven o'clock. We have taken about 450 prisoners in it, of all nations. I was down at the beach, at this time, superintending the disembarkation of my horse, which I have had a world of trouble in getting on shore, owing to its having arrived too late at Ramsgate to sail in the same vessel with the general's. This circumstance has been a source of greater vexation to me than I could well have foreseen at the beginning, and as I have an idle hour upon my hands, for reasons which I shall explain to you presently, I shall detail all my grievances to you.

'The headquarters moved the day before yesterday to Gripskirke, a village about six miles from the landing-place, a little out of the direction of Middelburg; yesterday they were removed to this place, and the division of the army under Sir Eyre Coote advanced to invest Flushing. I knew this day would be the only one that I could with safety employ in looking after my horse, and I was in hopes I should lose nothing by being out of the way till the afternoon. I therefore returned to the ships, and with some difficulty got my horse on shore. Vere having surrendered, I immediately made for it, and arrived as the garrison were laying down their arms. You will be pleased to hear that few lives have been lost in the

town; not above five or six. Many of the buildings have been damaged by the shells; it is a very pretty little town, and, like everything in this island, so clean and neat that it gives you more the idea of the model of such a place, made of paste-work, than the town itself; making allowances, however, for the little disorder we had, here and there, contrived to introduce into it. . . .

'Here I had the good fortune to fall in with our invincible major, whom I had hunted after in vain all the day before; he is looking remarkably well and quite fat, and is very much pleased with his situation. I do not think you will hear from him by this conveyance. He is still in the neighbourhood of Vere, and it is only an hour since I heard of the intention of sending off a messenger. As he will therefore not have an opportunity of telling it you himself, and having to his great annoyance promised him most faithfully that I would betray him the very first time I wrote to you, I now fulfil my vow, and declare to you that he wears a tremendous pair of moustachios to accompany the whiskers to which I believe you have already been introduced. The complexion of them very much resembles that of a carrot, so that you will not be surprised at my laughing very heartily when I discovered who it was: he, too, had never seen me equipped as an aide-de-camp, and not being at all prepared to encounter a pair of moustachios, it was a very fair subject for doubt for several minutes to bystanders whether we had ever seen one another before in our lives! Now that I have endeavoured to amuse you at his expense, it will be only fair towards him to tell you how he came by them. The fact is, Colonel Cochrane, who commands the battalion, has introduced them, and the fashion, like all others, has been followed by each individual under him who possessed the smallest share of *esprit de corps* as fast as the growth of whiskers in general would allow them to fall into the measure, so that probably poor Henry does not deserve to be so severely criticised, and the fashion, I can tell you, is beginning to lose ground with him, and I am half inclined to think he will be out of masquerade the next time we meet, which I think must be to-morrow.

'I set off for Middelburg, and now comes the doleful part of my story. I had the mortification to learn, on my arrival here, that the enemy had offered considerable opposition to the investment of Flushing, and that the commander-in-chief and the whole of the staff had been much exposed during the greater part of the morning. I own to you, I felt very foolish when I learnt all this, although certainly without reason, for it would have been impossible for me to have been of the smallest use without a horse, and I was well satisfied, as it turned out, that nothing but my own presence on the beach would accomplish it. I can conceive nothing more vexing than all this, notwithstanding. The fact is, there are cases when we can satisfy our reason, but our feelings not so easily, and this is one of them. It is probable that we have lost 100 or 150 men in this affair; several officers are wounded; the enemy's force is now concentrated in Flushing; from uncertain accounts, we are told they are from three thousand to four thousand. Our ships of war will be able to act upon the town immediately, and you may depend upon our getting possession of this place very shortly. Nothing can have gone on better than we have done hitherto, and if we are quick and decided we shall do all that is required of us, I am certain. I can give you no certain account of Colonel Walker; he is with Lord Huntly. We hear this division has landed upon Cadzand, and is in possession of everything that was expected from them. Sir J. Hope is going on equally well in South Beveland. . . .

'I shall now make you acquainted with another trouble of mine, which, however, does not tease me so much as the other. I have since yesterday had a violent cold in one of my eyes; fortunately I am lodged in the house with a physician, and he has assured me I shall be cured by to-morrow; there is little chance of anything being done to-day, as we are busied in preparations, and under this impression I have submitted to his prescription. God forbid that I should be disappointed in having depended so far upon my good fortune. Sir Howard was with the general yesterday, and I need not tell you how valuable his presence was.

'I have not described the country to you, but I shall be better able to do this as I go on; however, of this island I must tell you that what I have seen of it is perfectly beautiful in its way. The country is a perfect flat, and intersected (like all the rest of Zealand) with canals, but beautifully wooded; the land is probably the richest in the world, and it is therefore a constant variety of the finest pastures, covered with all kinds of cattle, rich cornfields, peas, beans, potatoes, in abundance; it is very like England, only that there is more of what is properly called neatness than exists even in England. There is not a farm-house that I have seen (and they are in great plenty, all over the country) that does not appear to be fitted up, altogether for show, and nothing for use, although they are all filled with plenty of good milk, excellent oaten bread, and cheese; of which, I need not tell you, we make very good use. As for this town, it must be called fine, in the most extensive meaning of the word. I cannot pretend to describe it to you yet, but in my next letter I hope I shall be better able. I do not find this writing affect my eye, but after I have done I shall certainly remain perfectly quiet and give it the best chance in the world.'

'Middelburg: August 7, 1809.

'We happen to be all separately billeted in this town, and I am therefore apart from the general, and take up my abode with a Doctor Scramder—his father is a doctor, and his grandfather was one, before either of them. I have thought it necessary to begin from the beginning, because I mean that his history should compose a principal feature in this "volume"; for the two latter it interested me very little what they had been, but I thought myself rather lucky when I learnt that he was one of the faculty, for, supposing the inflammation was owing to a common cold, I was glad to find a remedy so near at hand. Had I found it necessary, however, to rely altogether upon his good-will and inexperience in the business, I am not sure whether his prescriptions would not have proved as serious as they are ridiculous, in the present state of the case. He is a middle-aged man, of very good education, and

connected with the principal people of the town. I take for granted he talks his own language as well as his neighbours; but being, as yet, little prepared for meeting him on his own ground, I have had recourse to a little German and a good deal of French. Of the former he understands still less than myself, and the latter is such a jargon with him that we have frequently discoursed for hours together without either party being much the better for it, excepting, indeed, that we have both had the satisfaction of being good company, as far as lay in our power. He generally begins his story in French, out of regard for me, as being the language I am most familiar with. As he grows warm with his subject, he introduces a little German, where the French will not serve him, and before the business is over he becomes downright unmannerly, and utters a whole breathful of pure Dutch (if there *is* such a thing) before he finds out that he is talking to the deaf, for he generally leaves me very far behind him towards the end of the story. In this manner he sometimes betrays me into a laugh, very *mal à propos*, but for which I think the most uncharitable critic would pardon me. The other day I was talking to him about the climate; he says the weather is very healthy now, but that in a couple of months his harvest begins, and lasts till the frost sets in; during this time, he calculates, provided things go on as they have been used to do, upon having about a hundred patients at his mercy; but, notwithstanding the number of sick, he says very few die; and holding up his ten fingers by way of illustration, "*De mille sik, seulement* (so many) *mourir, et ce n'est pas assez.*" I really believe the poor man only meant me to understand that the disease was not so fatal as the number of victims to it would entitle us to suppose; but I thought the turn he gave it, without intention, was so ridiculous, that I burst out laughing, and threw myself at the mercy of his good-nature. As he is so charitable to insist upon always sitting with me, he has his dinner brought every day to the same table with mine; he dines very nearly in the same fashion that we do in England, and much too temperately with regard to wine, for he seldom drinks any.

This, however, does not prevent him from inviting me to such fare, although he is very well aware that meat and wine of all kinds are forbidden fruit to me; and this is the most extraordinary part of his character. He begins in this manner: "Voulez-vous vouler?" I tell him, "Non." "Pourquoi non? c'est bon pour vous." "Mais non pas pour l'œil," I tell him. "Ah! c'est vrai, mais autrement?" And hereabouts the debate generally ends, and his eloquence is saved, to serve at the next meal with as little effect. As my anecdotes have hitherto been tinctured with sarcasm, I should be sorry to omit one, which is the only one I could give you, as a proof of his good-nature. Following up his old system of serving my eye, he set before me, the other day, a set of costumes of all the provinces of Holland and Zealand, very curious and well done. I took such a fancy to them that I begged of him to send immediately to the bookseller's and endeavour to get it for me. Our messenger, however, returned without success; for this work comes from Amsterdam. At present the communication with Holland is shut, there are no copies to be had in the town, so that I found myself in a dilemma, from which, however, he soon released me, for, as I had already told him, I intended them for you, he insisted upon giving me the copy that he had, "pour plaisir," as he called it, and added that he would be able to get another when the communication was opened. There is the Dutch account belonging to each, with the French opposite to it; and the Dutch jargon is not the least entertaining part of the composition. I have fortunately heard of a very good toy-shop in this town, and as he has a little daughter of an age to be amused in this manner, I intend, the first time I go out, to get her one of the handsomest toys I can find, so that you will not have to accuse me of having *spunged* upon my worthy host when I deliver his present to you. I have yet a very interesting part of his story to tell you. A few days before the English arrived here, his wife and little son left him, to pay a visit at Leyden to some of her friends. In the meantime the communication with Holland had been closed; and in place of her returning to-day, as he expected,

it will depend upon the activity of our movements whether she will be able to return soon or not; but it is certainly very vexatious for him, and he appears much annoyed at it. Though, to take him at his word, you would say he bears it very fashionably, for he only says, "C'est très désagréable pour moi." I should not have ventured to interest you so long with my domestic adventures if I had had anything else to treat you with. But I must give you an account of our movements since I wrote to you last. Recollect I am not going to account for them all.

'We certainly have not been going on swimmingly (although this is the best term that could be applied, if we had been going on fast, for ours is a very aquatic expedition); but we move very statelily of late. I was wrong in telling you Lord Huntly had landed upon Cadzand; it was so reported here, but we have since learnt that the enemy are too strong in that island to render it practicable with his force. The grapes have therefore been voted sour, and I believe we are going to do without it. Lord Huntly is now, I understand, off Rammekens, in this island, a fort which surrendered the other day. I believe I have told you Colonel Walker is with him; the 9th are also in that division. I am afraid they will have had more of a watery excursion than they will know how to put up with good-humouredly.

'We have now a very large force collected before Flushing, which however seems inclined to be very sulky. Our heavy batteries are getting on, by degrees. They are, however, getting reinforcements by degrees, from the Cadzand side, and one should think, from appearances, that we have not the means of preventing it. The weather has been by no means favourable for us hitherto; we have had much heavy rain; and although our troops before the town have hutted themselves, by means of the wood and straw of which there is plenty in the neighbourhood, they are still but ill-prepared for so much wet weather as we have had lately.

'I believe it is the intention of General Brownrigg, and I believe likewise of Lord Chatham, to go over, in the course of a day

or two, into South Beveland; the whole island is in possession of Sir John Hope. Nothing can be more fortunate for me, as I purpose going out to-morrow, and shall have a day or two allowed me to see all that has been going on here since I arrived, previous to leaving the island.

'My landlord gives me the most favourable accounts of Beveland. He says the peasants are all very rich, the country abounding in cattle, and grain, and Goes, which you must call Goose, a very pretty town. I hope we shall soon enable the navy to come up the river.

'By-the-bye, I have never given you an account of the cruising part of our adventure.

'There happened to be about four-and-twenty of us on board the *Venerable*, and as they were the *troupe dorée*, I was packed off without ceremony to take up my lodging in the cockpit, together with three or four other victims to the shades. I thought it very like making a present of us to the infernal powers, for a chance of purchasing good weather. However, as I had never seen these regions before, and had little chance of seeing them in any other way, I resolved to turn virtuous for the occasion, and pass through it, if I could, *en amateur;* and, fortunately, I had little more than satisfied my curiosity, and it had just begun to lose the only recommendation it ever had in my eyes, that of novelty, when we were happily released from such accommodation. The first time I came into upper air, after having passed a night in these tristes abodes, it was really very like one of those unexpected returns that we read of in ancient story; and the rest of the fraternity all flocked round us when we came upon deck, as if we had something mysterious to tell them. I take for granted you know enough of the mechanism of a ship to be aware that a candle is the only resource against utter darkness in these gloomy recesses; but then, you must understand that they are very spare in make, and very thinly scattered up and down, so that you may fancy them so many glow-worms, or fixed stars, in a night otherwise dark.

'I shall not easily forget the scene that was opened to us,

when the signal was made to weigh anchor in the Downs, at four o'clock in the morning. All at once there was such a hullabaloo, all talkers and no hearers, ropes running about in all directions, and nearly as inconvenient to the legs as if they had been so many serpents, hammers going as hard as they could, directly overhead, in getting up the cable, and all the little midshipmen running about helter-skelter, like so many imps of darkness, enjoying the whole catastrophe. You may conceive our situation a very happy one, as we had no business upon deck so early in the morning; and as we were swinging in hammocks, that looked like so many cobwebs up and down the cockpit, the heads of the passengers often interfered with what we called our slumbers.

'After all, notwithstanding the grievances I have enumerated, I think myself very lucky in having been on board this ship, as I have had an opportunity of seeing a great deal of the principal naval officers employed on this service, particularly Sir R. Strachan and Sir Home Popham.

'The former commands in chief; they are men of such different character that it is impossible to see them together without being interested; the one is all heat and energy, what he has immediately in view he will certainly accomplish if it be possible, but I should think him too hasty to be well calculated for anything that requires much combination; he is strictly what is called a very fine fellow, and I should think an excellent seaman. The other is much more circumspect, at the same time that he possesses perhaps an equal share of energy, and I take him to be a much abler man. Whenever I have seen him he has made himself in a manner the Atlas of the whole operation, and even here he would not leave us when there was nothing to do in his own sphere, until it was out of character for him to go further. I do not think he is liked in the navy, nor do I think he need be much mortified at this; he is what they call too meddling, by which they mean to imply (without being aware of it) that he makes himself very useful upon all occasions and in all ways; he is so used to be actively employed, and is besides naturally so bustling, that what is evidently an exertion

with most men is reduced to a habit with him, and this I take to be a great point gained in the discharge of public business.

'8*th*.—I have just been with the general, and I find there is a post going off this evening. We are going to ride out towards the lines in an hour or two, and I hope I shall be able in my next letter to give you a favourable account of our proceedings against Flushing. The French made an unsuccessful sortie last night. Lord Huntly's division, I have just heard, are to land immediately in South Beveland; and Colonel Walker is of course with them. I am sorry to find the general thinks he cannot frank from hence, although I verily believe he is mistaken, and I am, therefore, afraid I shall bear heavy[1] upon you this time.'

'Middelburg: August 11, 1809.

'My dear Sophia,—I have since I wrote to you last been bringing up leeway, as the sailors call it, and I am in hopes that I am at last nearly upon a par with my neighbours—I mean in point of making myself acquainted with all that has been going forward since my blindness came over me, of which I have now quite got the better.

'You see, Flushing still bids us defiance. Our batteries open, we are confidently promised, immediately. They are threatening us with salt water to drink, if we do not bring them to terms soon. Our preparations are certainly formidable.

'The general is indefatigable; he is out every day looking at the works. I usually accompany him, but really more *en amateur* than because I have any business there; however, it is a satisfaction to see all that is going forward, where the most trifling incident is interesting.

'I have this moment left Henry in the street, and could not prevail upon him to dine with us. I think he is right, as it is as well to be in the way as much as possible. His regi-

[1] Two shillings and fourpence was the postage charged on the letter, which weighed one ounce.

ment is at the camp, but I assure you they are very snugly lodged.

'I have not told you, I believe, that this is the time of the fair in this town. The week which has just passed was the period of its duration, but our arrival, so *mal à propos*, has detained them beyond the time fixed for their departure, and they will be forced to keep open shop here till some communication is opened with their homes. They affect to regret this, but they are robbing us of our money every day, and I think will gain more by their disappointment than if they had been hurried off, in obedience to the fair-laws—a ridiculous application of the term where there is so much foul play going forward. They come from Amsterdam and all parts of Brabant and Flanders. They have a number of curious things, and I dare say many that you would be conjurors to get in England at this time, if we knew it. . . .'

'Middelburg: August 16, 1809.

'The mail which brings you this will, in all probability, put you in possession of the particulars of the surrender of Flushing, although I believe it is not all settled at this moment. These French generally bewilder us for, at least, eight-and-forty hours before we can discover whether they are serious with us or not, and we consider ourselves fortunate if we at last contrive, somehow or other, to bring them into honest daylight. However, their situation in this instance is so distressing that there is little chance of our getting into a scrape with them this time.

'We are all very well, all you know at least. I will detail them to you that I may rob you of the slightest grounds for alarm—Henry, Sir Howard, Colonel Walker, and I. The three former I saw quite well yesterday after all hostilities had ceased, and the last of the four I had the good fortune to behold this morning in a looking-glass, very rosy, and much refreshed, apparently, after a sound sleep, which it appears he was not a little in want of last night.

'I must not omit telling you I had the good luck to accompany the two negotiators into the town yesterday. I was the medium through which secrets of State were passed between the commander-in-chief and the two negotiators. Although this employment was attended with a little inconvenience, as I shall presently explain to you, I would not have missed it for a trifle. I had an opportunity of conversing for several hours with their principal officers, and particularly with the two generals, Munet and Austin (not being admitted to a part in the grand debate, which was all this time carrying forward between the French deputies and ours); and although this conversation led to many painful sensations, you will easily conceive how interesting it was to me.

'When I tell you we have bombarded the town for two days and nights successively and employed our most formidable means by sea and land, you will not be unprepared for a tale of distress. Two hundred of the people are said to have suffered within these two days. They certainly aggravated many circumstances in order to mortify us, but the truth on these occasions is too much to bear with decency. The town is described as being in a manner destroyed, at least in its buildings, and in everything it held valuable. The best excuse I can have for not bearing witness or having the satisfaction to refute any of these statements is that they always led me blindfold backwards and forwards, from the town to their advanced posts. However, I am afraid we have among ourselves too many foundations from which to draw such inferences, for it was one sheet of flame the whole of the second night. It was certainly not so painful an object as Copenhagen in flames, because it is not the Government seat of a nation, nor can it be supposed to have contained anything of value, in a literary point of view, that can have suffered; as a violation (a necessary one, however) of humanity, it was the same thing. The garrison do not appear to have suffered so much as we had reason to expect: they contrived to shelter themselves wherever shelter was to be had. There is a handsome thing they did by an officer of ours who was taken

prisoner the other day. When the bombardment commenced, the general lodged him in his own house, but this neighbourhood was found to be so hot that he packed him off to where all the women (for I am sorry to say that many are said to have been in town) had taken refuge. This, of course, was the safest place; it was what every one sees ought to have been done on such an occasion, but it is not always we find people so considerate in trifles when objects of much greater moment are presenting themselves, for it was, comparatively, a trifle. By all accounts, I think we shall take about three thousand men. You will find our loss has not been trifling during the last fortnight; not greater, however, than might have been expected. One of the French remarked to me, rather sarcastically, that we had thrown bullets and shells enough at them during the last two days to have ruined a poor nation; I believe I told him it was fortunate to have shoulders equal to the weight on these occasions. I had a difficult card to play for poor Middelburg. They have a strong suspicion that the people here have received us rather too courteously, and more so than compulsion alone would justify. So that if ever it falls into their hands again, it is natural to suppose they will make them pay handsomely for what they term *leur perfidie*. Mostly from policy, and I really believe in some measure from goodwill towards us, for they have suffered much from the French, they pay us much deference; not quite so much, however, as Munet seems to imagine. He asked me, 'Et le Bourgmestre, qu'est-ce qu'il a fait de son ruban? je suppose qu'il l'a mis dans sa poche.' By the riband he means the order he wears in honour of the King of Holland. However, I took great pains to rescue poor Middelburg, and assured him that the Bourgmestre, in whose house General Brownrigg lives, had not doused his colours, as the sailors say; and he really has not. However, I suppose he will. There is an anecdote told of him of which it is our interest to learn the truth. He has a beautiful room, in which I am now sitting, ornamented with historical paintings relating to the Netherlands. At the top and bottom of the room are

full-length portraits of the last Stadtholder and the Princess of Orange. When Louis Bonaparte visited him, some months ago, he is said to have placed a chair for his Majesty immediately under the portrait of the Prince of Orange, and, of course, *vis-à-vis de la princesse.* The story concludes by stating that the King flew into a violent passion, and pranced into the next room, where he was not so unpleasantly haunted. This is something too bold in the colouring, you will say; but I tell the story as it was told to me.

'*Eight o'clock, Wednesday.*—I have just heard that our deputies returned at two o'clock this morning. We have been too long about it. They say, however, it is all settled. I can tell you, too, that the delay was partly accidental; this is a fact, so that I think we shall come off better than we generally do from a negotiation with the French. The general is pleased with the terms, which certainly augurs well; I mean *my* general. I am writing in a violent hurry, for I am afraid of the messenger taking his departure precipitately. I shall be able to tell you soon what are to be our future operations.'

To his Aunt.

'Zer Goes, South Beveland: August 21, 1809.

'The headquarters were moved to this place yesterday. It is intended to advance them as far as Crabbendyke early to-morrow. You will see it on the map, nearly at the eastern extremity of the island. . . .

'As to whether we are to proceed beyond this extremity, upon my word I am unable to satisfy you. I am convinced, however, that it is a subject worthy the consideration of much graver heads than mine. If I thought fit to throw off all stiffness of expression, I should say that it is at this moment about a "toss up" which way we go.

'Your late *Gazettes* containing the news from Spain have thrown us into a state of suspense, that we are waiting with no little anxiety to be rid of. It is too proud a thing for the country to admit of our wishing that it had not been, and our history would have been robbed of one of its brightest pages;

but it is already studded with so many precious ornaments of this kind, that one purchased at so sad a cost might perhaps have been dispensed with at this moment. We hear that you are all much elated in England at this event; it is certainly very natural, for it has been glorious in a very high degree; but it is too like the victory that Pyrrhus lamented to have gained over the Romans to give such complete satisfaction when well considered. To tell you the truth, I am afraid we have not erred on the safe side this time. I believe Sir Arthur possesses more military talent than any officer in our army, and much judgment; but he is impetuous, and I am afraid his ardent spirit has blinded him for a moment to the consequences to which even brilliant victory must expose an army situated as his is. After all that has passed before his eyes he cannot surely place any reliance upon these degenerate Spaniards, and if the failure of Sir John Moore was insufficient to prove to him how little should be risked in their favour, the circumstances of his own march through the country and their behaviour in the late battle, one would think, should be fully equal to serving such a purpose. We learn from his own despatches how careless the Government have been of forwarding his operations, and I have seen several most detailed accounts of the battle, which all join in celebrating the ill-behaviour of our allies; and by all accounts the Dutch behaved not half so ill at Fontenoy as the Spaniards at Talavera. If he is not yet content he may try his luck further with them; he is already one of the most fortunate men to be met with in military history, but if he is not well on his guard he will dress out a suit of sables for his country, that the most brilliant success we can be graced with in this part of the world will not be worthy to withdraw from her shoulders. The latest accounts from his army mention a report of Soult having broken up from Salamanca, and that he had commenced his march on Placentia. This, if true, will be worth while attending to; in short, I believe I have written enough to convince you that we are hard to please in Zealand, and that we are becoming like the owners of the soil, a very cloudy set.'

'Bathoz: Monday, 28th.

'When I left off here I had some hopes of being able to despatch my letter the following morning; I was, however, disappointed, but I have already been served several tricks of this sort, so that you must even put up with my old news. We have been here four days, for the purpose of keeping up a readier communication with the navy. I believe everything is finally settled, and I guess we go no further, but upon my word it is a very guess, for they are uncommonly mysterious; to-morrow headquarters return to Goes. Sophia shall hear from me immediately if I am mistaken.

'Henry is at Flushing. We are all well here. We understand they have a trick either on this or your side the water of opening our letters; if true, it is a shabby one, particularly as they have not put us on our guard against writing naughtily. It would require some very out-of-the-way information to repay them for the pains of reading one of mine; and by the time you have got so far, I think I may make sure of getting you to vouch for me. I long to hear a better account of you. When any of you write you may put your letter under cover to General Brownrigg. Give my best love to Sophia and Miss Goldsworthy. Colonel Walker is at Walcheren, and I have every reason to believe quite well.

'Believe me, my dear aunt,

'Your ever affectionate nephew,

'WILLIAM GOMM.

There are no further letters to be found from Captain Gomm respecting the end of this disastrous campaign; he retired with the rest of Lord Chatham's army into the fever-stricken swamps of Walcheren. Here the mortality among the troops was most fearful, and before the end of the year the sorry remains of the expeditionary force had to be withdrawn. The total number of deaths during the occupation amounted to 7,000, and nearly double that number were sent home sick, thus reducing the strength of the force by more than 50 per cent.

Captain Gomm himself contracted the fever, from which

few of the expedition escaped, and during four years of active service in the Peninsula he continued to suffer from it. It was frequently his practice, as appears from his memoranda, to carry a bottle of bark in his holster pipe instead of a pistol. The fever does not seem to have finally left him till it was, as he put it, 'scared away' in the trenches before San Sebastian in 1813. When afterwards, that same year, he was wounded at the battle of the Nive, the musket ball penetrated the holster pipe whose occupant, he says, was no longer the bottle of bark.

Twenty millions sterling are believed to have been squandered upon this futile expedition.

It is no wonder that this untoward result roused into a flame the ill-smothered embers of a conflagration in the Duke of Portland's administration, and effected a change in the most important offices of the State.

Mr. Canning, the Foreign Secretary, had for some time been urging the dismissal of Lord Castlereagh from his office of Secretary of War and Colonies on account of his incapacity. As this was not done, Mr. Canning himself resigned, and Lord Castlereagh, feeling himself insulted, also resigned, and challenged Mr. Canning, and on September 22 they fought the duel in which Mr. Canning was wounded. About this time the Duke himself also sent in his resignation, and almost immediately died; it was some time before a new ministry could be formed, but on the failure of the attempted coalition a Tory ministry was formed by Mr. Spencer Perceval, the Marquis of Wellesley being recalled from Spain to take Mr. Canning's place as Secretary for Foreign Affairs.

This was, indeed, a time of great national depression, and there was general distress prevailing throughout the manufacturing districts owing to the stagnation of trade. The power of Napoleon may be considered this year to have reached its height. Holland became incorporated with France, and the Emperor was enabled to concentrate his best troops under Massena on the war in the Peninsula, which was carried on with varying success. It had been the intention of the Walcheren expedition to draw off Napoleon's forces from Spain, but the attempt was vain, and the failure complete.

CHAPTER VIII.

1810.

PENINSULAR WAR—LISBON—CONVENT OF BATALHA—THE PORTUGUESE ARMY—THOMAR.

THE 9th Regiment, on their return, appear again to have been quartered in Canterbury, and the winter of 1809-10 was passed by them in uncertainty as to whether they were to be sent to the East Indies or to the war in the Peninsula. In the beginning of March 1810, however, they were relieved of their anxiety, and were ordered to embark immediately for Spain.

'Lisbon: March 28, 1810.

'We entered the Tagus last night. We have had some blowing weather, but not more than is always the case at this season. To-morrow we land. We expect to remain in Lisbon a few days to prepare ourselves for marching to join the army about Coimbra or Vizeu. I hear they are in high spirits here; I have not been on shore yet.'

'Lisbon: March 29.

'We landed yesterday, and expect to halt here a week or ten days; then to proceed to join the army. I gave you a prospect of an improving season in my last letter; but I am sorry to find upon closer inquiry that, although nothing can be milder or more constant than the climate is at present, we have still an April of rain to look forward to; unless it is decreed that the knowing ones should be taken in this time, which we are all praying may be the case; otherwise, it may chance to persecute us *en pleine marche*, which is by no means to be desired. Our horses, I am glad to tell you, are arrived. I have not yet seen them. We hear they are safe, but in point

of condition rather *à la Roçinante*, so that they must be pampered immediately. I have not yet had time to find Mr. Stuart. I have, however, ascertained that he is in town.

'I must not deceive you by telling you that Lisbon is improved in its appearance since I last left it. The French had been exercising a very strict discipline among them, and in no branch more pointedly than in that of keeping their town clean; and as we are told that every evil of necessity involves some good, the assertion is strongly supported in this instance; for these graceless fellows, in the midst of all their enormities, had nearly succeeded in reducing our good city of Lisbon to a sense of cleanliness when they handed them over to us. They at least made no scruple of pointing out to them the deformity of their manners, and this was reasonably the first step to be taken. We have since suffered them to relapse, and if I can trust my remembrance so far back as the time of my first visit among them, I should say decidedly that the disease, according to the old rule, is more virulent than it was before its progress was checked. It is a pity, because I do not think that our modern travellers or pamphleteers allow the national character to be such a patchwork of perfections that a charge of cleanliness should be suspected of passing for an incumbrance in the *tout ensemble* of the whole, as a learned friend of mine sometimes says. To be candid, however, I believe that in the relation in which we stand towards them we have a difficult card to play in this respect; and that it may be done with a better grace by the French than by us is clear, since it is one of the heaviest grievances they complained of, and an invasion of their dearest rights. I shall only add they are spoiled children now, and, to one who has just left Middelburg, the cleanest town in the world, very dirty dogs.

'The last accounts from the frontier are encouraging. The French are said to be showing a disposition to retire in the north. It can only be from a want of provisions, and I think it is one very likely to exist among them. Cadiz, above all, is interesting at this moment; the same difficulties are said to be gaining ground among them. A division of Guards has

just passed on to its support. We have certainly managed exceedingly well in all this business.'

'Lisbon: April 5, 1810.

'I have had so little opportunity of seeing Lisbon hitherto that, although I am paying my third visit to it, it is almost new to me. I have, therefore, all the advantages of a man who keeps his Saturday paper to read on Sunday. The first time I was here I did not care about it, and the second time I was forced to care about something else, for there was a great deal of fagging cut out about that time for the worthy Deputy Assistant Quartermaster-General's Department. . . .

'I am trying hard at this moment to recollect all I had hitherto learnt of the Portuguese language, and to separate it from others that have popped in upon it.

'We had no sooner become familiar with the squeak of a Portuguese than we were led away to listen to the gargling tones of a Spaniard. This, however, was not so bad; but to add the grunting of a Dutch boor to both of these is monstrous; it out-Herods Herod.

'As I am satisfied that nothing tends so much to conciliate the affections of a people towards you as the conforming to their manners and customs, it is worth the attention of any one who comes among them to waste a little study upon this; and I am certain that no sacrifice will be apt to win them sooner than the practice of talking their language.

'I attend all the public places I can get admission to, and have a great deal to say to the orange-women, particularly the old ones. You have no idea of their loquacity in this country; they beat you all out-and-out after they arrive at a certain age. They are like Shakespeare's Caliban—eloquent, though not handsome. To speak more to the point, they are hideously ugly when they become old. The climate provides them with a tawny, walnut complexion, and most of those I have seen might pass at a masquerade for the Tisiphone of the ancients, or the Hecate of more modern times, without owing anything to colouring or dress whatever beyond their daily wearing. I have thought it necessary to say so much in their behalf, because you must

allow that it is most excellent practice for me, and no danger of getting into a scrape, here at least. Eloquence, I allow, under any other combination, might give you more alarm, and I therefore do not risk a *tête-à-tête* with anything under seventy.

'I saw Mr. Stuart on Sunday; he invited me to dine with him the same day. He recollects having met H. when he was retreating with the Junta from Madrid upon Badajos.

'I dare say you recollect Henry's story about the coach and six. He inquired much after him, and frequently after aunt and yourself. He likewise talked to me about Countess Brühl, and expressed himself very handsomely for the attention he recollects having received from her while at Berlin. As his house is the grand emporium of news, I could not help learning some from him.

'I am afraid we shall march earlier than we expected; I certainly wish to remain here till the Semaine Sainte is over.

'When I have anything very important to say, I must contrive to write to General Benson and Sir Howard; but I shall be in high luck if I contrive to get off on these occasions without being charged with idleness by one party or the other; for it is not always recollected that it is at these times we are least at liberty to do as we wish.

'7*th*.—It is raining all this day. Those who are determined to look upon the fair side of the picture content themselves that there is the less to come. I wish it may be just so. We shall certainly march in the course of a very few days. We received an order to equip for the field yesterday.'

'Lisbon: April 12, 1810.

'They are still suffering us to loll on the lap of ease, and give us reason to hope we shall yet remain here long enough to have our curiosity gratified. However, I am sufficiently practised in my profession to be on my guard against treachery in this instance, and have therefore been busily employed since I last wrote to you in providing myself with a mule for the conveyance of my lumber. I have succeeded wonderfully well, if Tom's judgment is oracular;; for he says he is sure the

mule will carry my establishment with pleasure. I shall not answer for so much as Tom has ventured to do, but think he will do so with tolerable ease to himself. And considering that the animal is naturally stubborn and perverse, this is all we can reasonably expect. . . '

'Saturday, 14th.

'A mail arrived this morning from the army; it brings no order whatever respecting our moving. The French appear to have withdrawn a corps they had pushed forward towards Almeida, and threaten nothing very tremendous at present.

'I shall give you an account of our next busy week, if we are allowed to pass it here.'

'Lisbon: April 21, 1810.

'I am just returned from hearing the "Hallelujah" sung in the abbey church at Belem.

'In one of the squares before I reached the church, which is about three miles from my house, I observed a large concourse of the lower orders assembled, and I was in hopes I had fallen in with a procession of one of the orders of monks which I have been in vain endeavouring to waylay through the whole week; but upon closer inspection I was disappointed to find the attention was taken up with two figures of men in effigy, dangling from something like a gibbet; and the people were taking unusual interest in offering them all sorts of indignities. These were Jews. I was on the point of learning more of the ceremony when suddenly up went the Jews on the wings of a firebrand, to the no small surprise of myself and the utter disconcerting of my poor horse, who made a spring as if he meant to be after the Jews, and leave me behind. However, he was not so well equipped for the flight as these gentlemen were, for I learnt afterwards that the managers of the exhibition had lodged a certain number of sky-rockets and other combustibles within the victims; so that by setting fire to a certain train, which they were about when I arrived, an instant conflagration and explosion took place, and the shoutings of the people crowned the catastrophe. They asked me

whether we served Jews so on these occasions; and I told them by all means; for if we do not look sharp they will be serving us in the same way shortly; for I believe, if the truth were known, they look upon us as something between the Jews and themselves, but much nearer akin to the Jews!

'Here is some news, very generally believed in Lisbon to-day: Madrid evacuated by the French and entered by the Spaniards; the French retreating at all points from Spain, and an insurrection in France. We have no thoughts of moving at present. I have some hopes I shall continue to get my letters sent to you *free* or almost; a consummation devoutly to be wished, you will say. I have received many attentions from Mr. Stuart since I last mentioned him to you.'

'Lisbon: May 2, 1810.

'We are still here, nor do I see any reason to be fearful that we shall move soon. I say to be fearful because, really, unless the army is employed in the field, it will suit both my convenience and taste much more to remain in Lisbon than to be staggering idly-busy up and down the country without an object. Some wise Greek used to say that for his part he found nothing very interesting in the contemplation of hedgerows and ploughed fields, and he thought all that was worth knowing could be learnt in Athens. We are all of his opinion to a man; and while things last as they now stand, it is to be hoped our fighting character will run no risk of suffering in your opinion, for there seems to be nothing serious intended immediately on the part of the French; and if the truth were well known, I think it likely our movements will depend a great deal upon theirs. We hear constantly of their appearing in force upon the frontier, but they as regularly disappear; and until this latter part of the performance is dispensed with on their part, it is probable we shall not be disturbed. Besides, I have, since I wrote to you last, extended the sphere of my acquaintance into rather à respectable neighbourhood; and this is a fresh inducement, if I wanted one, to make me avoid the society of stone walls, and so forth.

'I have been at two balls here, and at one which Mr. Stuart gave the other night, a very splendid one.

'We had a bolero in the course of the evening, danced by two ladies.

'This laudable practice of Mr. Stuart's (for I am happy to learn it is to be a practice) is at present in its infancy, this having been the first given since his arrival; but we expect a repetition of it every fortnight.'

'Lisbon: May 29, 1810.

'We hear nothing new from the frontier. At Cadiz, if reports are true, things go on better than can be expected; the French are said to be giving up all hopes of reducing it, and their regiments to be deserting methodically. The war in Spain, I believe, is very unpopular among them. To return to Lisbon: there are two balls every fortnight—one given by the Admiral, the other by Mr. Stuart. I have given you the character of both, I believe; and if they do not continue to be consistent, it is because they improve. Mr. Stuart's in particular are the handsomest things of the kind I have ever witnessed, and do him great credit. It is not a mere trifle that the country should be well represented in this way, although not of vital consequence. I dine frequently with him, and he is always very attentive to me whenever I meet him. I am much pleased with his manner of speaking of my aunt Brühl. Whatever attentions she may have had an opportunity of showing him while at Berlin he has done ample justice to in the manner in which he has recollected them.

'Sir Brent Spencer is just arrived here, and gone up the country. I called at his house an hour after he left the town. I shall make myself known to him if I should happen at any time to get into his neighbourhood with the army. At present we have no prospect of moving.

'Troops arriving from England will possibly drive us forward.'

'Lisbon: June 7, 1810.

'I believe I can give you no news of any consequence from

the frontier; it is said that Massena has been declared King of Portugal and Regent of Spain during the absence of Joseph Bonaparte: and the Lusitanian Court is held for the present at Salamanca. We are much in the dark about this gentleman; and as twilight and fear are both very active agents in swelling the size of objects beyond their natural proportions, he is at present very tall in our estimation here; and they think he is presently to come, like Cæsar's spirit, and, "in these confines with a monarch's voice, cry 'Havock,' and let slip the dogs of war." If such is to be the case, we must try and make another Actæon of this mighty hunter, if we can only get the ladies to help us; for I need not tell you the piece is not to be got up without their interference. If report says true, the dogs are not ill-disposed to perform their part, for we hear of their deserting very frequently. At present we have no prospect of leaving Lisbon.

'We have had for the last week or two such a succession of sultry, oppressive heat that the Portuguese have changed their object of terror for a time, and Massena has given way to an earthquake. However, Massena has come upon them again, with lightning and rain at his heels, and I believe he will keep his ground, for the earthquake seems to be put off for the present. You will have had accounts before this reaches you of the melancholy fate of the prisoners on board two of the hulks at Cadiz. The story of these poor Frenchmen who were taken with Dupont, whenever it is detailed, will form an era in the history of martyrdom. I believe all is going on well at Cadiz. Vallasteros is reported to have gained some advantages over the French in the neighbourhood of Seville; but to what extent I know not.'

'Lisbon: June 18. 1810.

'At last the long-expected order has arrived for moving us up the country. We march on Thursday. Three out of the four regiments in garrison here—the 4th, 9th, and 38th—march to Leyria. The 83rd remain. Whether this is in consequence of any movement on the frontier, or, which is full as likely, of an expected arrival of fresh troops from England, I

know not. Since we are moving, however, I had rather it should be in this direction than in the other, towards Badajos. You must recollect that the army passed through Leyria in its advance against Junot, so that we have something more than our curiosity to gratify, in returning to this part of the country, so near the scene of our exploits, etc.

'I hardly think we shall remain in Leyria, but we saw enough of it to recommend it as a quarter, and I dare say we shall keep from starving, if it should be the order of the day (which, however, I have my doubts about), as long as our neighbours. I believe it is about five days' march from Lisbon. The bad weather seems at last to be completely at an end, and they promise us settled summers for a thousand years to come. Be this as it may, we may think ourselves very fortunate in escaping all that has passed over us, so much at our ease.

'You have heard, I dare say, by this time, of Massena's having declared himself King of Portugal and hangman to all the English officers he can entrap in the Portuguese service; don't believe a word of it; he has done neither one nor the other. Indeed the first does not sound very probable, and for the second, although I do not take him to be all in all a *preux chevalier*, he would hardly give such a stimulus to the spirit of knight errantry among the English as this would go to produce. Tell aunt I am very much obliged to her for her good advice, and shall follow it to the letter; for although she must know that General Payne is gone home, Sir Brent has slipped into his boots, and I am sure if aunt could have forestalled events, for Payne she would have written Spencer. I am still to be Vicar of Bray, you see. Thank aunt also for trying to get me a crowquill to Lord Wellington—the acquaintance I have made with him is so very slight that I cannot build upon it as it stands, and I should like very well to be acquainted with him better. . . .'

'Leyria: June 29, 1810.

'The post which arrived here yesterday from Lisbon brings us the intelligence of two packets having arrived from

England since we began our march; with the agreeable addition, that all our letters have been sent up to the head-quarters of the army at Cellorico; so that we may whistle for them till we have learnt patience, and then *da capo*; for I dare say they will be kept in lavender for us, expecting our arrival one day or other.

'We ended our march several days ago, and with it, I must add, our labours; for since the rains have ceased, the heat has been more intense than ever I have felt it in this country. We consequently took the liberty of benighting ourselves as much as possible; but several of our marches were so very long that we were forced to be "borrowers of the day" for a hot hour or twain, and on these occasions Sir Phœbus took ample revenge upon us for the trick we had played him. How long we stay here is very uncertain. I believe I have already told you that since they sent us out of Lisbon, I hoped it would be to make use of us; but if they have no room for us at present at the scene of action, I shall be very well content to be left here some time longer. I am very well lodged; and as if it was intended I should always be well taken care of, I have this time a Portuguese doctor for my host. He is a character of the first order; in appearance and carriage he is quite *à la Quichotte*, and when he has his pictured jacket and slippers on, and struts about my room (which is a very long one), I am positive a painter would not desire a more lively image of the knight, if he wanted to give us an idea of him about a week before he set out on his tour. He is rather hypochondriac, and in the most raven tones you ever heard he croaks in my ear, "Ah! la guerre! la guerre!" This he does more than twice a day. He says it is very strange to him that while he is doing all he can to keep men alive they should be hard at work putting one another out of the way; and one or the other of us must be wrong. This morning he came into my room before I was well awake, and with a face full as ugly as the man's who "drew Priam's curtain in the dead of night," told me the French had taken Ciudad Rodrigo, and were battering Almeida and Badajos. He might have added with the same guns, and

there would have been as good authority for the latter part of the story, I believe, as for the beginning.

'To prove to you that we mean to be very good friends, when he made his exit this morning he read my name on the cover of my trunk, and exclaimed, "Ah, M. le Capitaine Gomm; c'est un bon capitaine, et je serai toujours son ami, parce qu'il est très policé." So much at present for my worthy doctor.

'This town, from its situation, has been a thoroughfare for all the troops of all nations that have passed through the country, and by their own account they are as little indebted almost to those who came to protect as to those who came to plunder them. The doctor says they have had all the world except Russians and Turks among them, and he declares these are to come. They all complain therefore of their poverty, and we feel for them with no common concern, for the disease is epidemic. The markets are poorly supplied, and there is no wine to be had in the town that one can drink; indeed, they say it is not to be had in the country: at the same time do not believe but that we are many degrees removed from danger of starvation, since we are still hankering after luxuries.

'The country about Leyria is beautiful. I never was more delighted than with a ride I took yesterday, to a convent of the Dominican order, about two leagues from here. If you have ever looked into a collection of plates treating of this kind of architecture, you must have met with a representation of it, for it is held up as a model by all the cognoscenti, and considered as the most beautiful in its kind existing.

'It was built about four centuries ago, by John the First, to commemorate a great victory he gained over the Spaniards and Moors at Aljubarrota, somewhere in the neighbourhood, and thence it takes its name, Batalha. It is composed of two different sorts of architecture: the church is Gothic, in the same style with the other buildings of the kind in these countries, and very handsome. At the east end of it there was to have been a Moorish chapel, symbolical, I suppose, of the double triumph I have mentioned; but the architect died while he was completing this part of his work, and there was none hardy enough to con-

tinue it after him. He had, however, gone near enough to complete all but the roof, and as it stands it has all the appearance, at first sight, of a ruin. I confess to you that I was romantic enough for five minutes to regret that they had undeceived me on this point, for I certainly could not help thinking it more respectable and interesting as a ruin than as an unfinished piece of work; however, I believe, for the interest of the artist, the whole truth should out; for great judges say that an unfinished work, from the hand of a great master, will generally raise higher expectations in the observer than are often answered in its completion; and if so, I congratulate him in this instance, for he had a great deal to answer for. Nothing can be more encumbered with ornament than this style of architecture; but the work is so exquisitely well carried through that it immediately called to my mind Walter Scott's idea when he says that the carving upon the pillars was as if some fairy or other dealer in magic had wreathed together branches of trees with their foliage on, and suddenly turned them to stone, so lightly and cunningly wrought they were. Indeed, the whole account of Melrose almost, is but an accurate and prosaic description of this beautiful building, even to the painted glass, of which there is a great deal, and very fine, in the church; and it is almost the only one in the country in which I have seen it. I regretted much when I passed through Leyria before that I could not find time to visit this chef-d'œuvre of its kind, for like all other things that are worth having, it is not to be got at without some pains, as it lies entirely out of the high-road, in the midst of a thick wood of pine and olive trees, and surrounded by hills, and is by no means to be stumbled upon. But it is a beautiful ride from this; and as I mean frequently to visit it myself, I shall make it my business to have it courted in its retirement by all the persons of taste I can find. There are about thirty monks living in the convent, Dominicans, who really know its history (as many of them at least as I had an opportunity of questioning) tolerably well, and can tell you who founded it, and who the architect was, where he was buried, and many other particulars; and

perhaps why it was founded, but of this I am not sure, for I did not ask them. I owe this flight to my doctor, who is going to lend me a history of the country, which I intend making my way through, unless I should be *enlevé* or *tiré en route*, and I shall perhaps be able in the course of my paper-travels to pick up something more particular about the battle, and tack it on to whatever new I shall discover on the subject, when I write again. There is, besides, a ruined castle belonging to this town, that I am always looking at. It must have been a place of great strength, when such things were strong, and is now one of the most picturesque objects that can be met with, and likely to command more respect from its years than from its military preparations. We have, however, sent some guns up to it lately, for the purpose of scouring a road leading into the town on the north side, in case it should ever be trod again by unhallowed feet; and they will answer the purpose very well.

'The hill on which it stands rises suddenly from the middle of the town, perfectly separate from and commanding everything about it; covered on one side with thick wood, and on the other, after a certain height, commences a rugged, perpendicular rock, and crowning the top of this is the old ruined castle; nothing can be more striking than it is.

'The doctor has just been with me, and declares that if the English remain some time longer in Leyria he will positively learn English, for he says he has a great many *lumières* and a dictionary, and he will learn it, he calculates, in about two months.

'The latest accounts from Ciudad Rodrigo say that the French have not yet brought up their battering train. From Cadiz we hear nothing lately.'

'Thomar: July 8, 1810.

'My letter from Leyria will convince you that we have not been taken by surprise, as well as in a hurry, from that neighbourhood. We received a very short notice, and after two days' march arrived here yesterday. We paced it in the shade almost the whole way; marching continually through woods of olive and pine.

'It would puzzle me as much to tell you what is to become of us now as it did from Leyria; no one has impudence enough even to guess at it seriously. You will perceive from the map that our present position renders us equally come-at-able for either division of the army on the frontier. General Hill is at Portalegri, and Lord Wellington in the neighbourhood of Almeida. Fame has been wildly at work within these few days, and sent General Hill with his division across the Tagus to Castel Branco, but no one believes it here. All I can say is that this move of ours seems intended to render us as manageable for him as for any one else, and we shall most probably help to watch the passes of the Tagus about Abrantes and Punhete, or the other entrances by the two Idanhas and Castel Branco. The French really seem to be all inactivity for some time past, certainly from incapacity; for I believe they have very good intentions of proceeding hitherward as soon as they can. We, on the other hand, are all preparation; we have seen more to put us in spirits within the last two days than we have since we entered the country. You must know I am one of those who think there is something in the Portuguese, like the rest of us; and that almost the same effects may be produced upon them, by the same causes, as in other cases. I have thought so all along, but we like to see our prejudices, whatever they may be, confirmed.

'We found here, on our arrival, the Lusitanian legion. This is the Portuguese corps of light troops which brought itself so much into notice under Sir Robert Wilson (whose praises, by-the-bye, they never cease to sound) when he led them into the rear of the French armies, then in the neighbourhood of Talavera, and scoured the whole country almost to the suburbs of Madrid, embarrassing them excessively. They necessarily lost many during this enterprising excursion, and their ranks have been since filled with recruits. They have been quartered here about three months, and marched out of the town this evening for Torres Novas, just after they had completed their equipment in arms and clothing, everything of which is English. It is not a little gratifying to us to have

this work going on immediately under our eyes; and we may say of the resources of England what Burke applied to the fine arts of painting and statuary, 'that they had extended the boundaries of creation'; for till within these very few months Portugal had no armies, nor the means of raising them, even when her existence was at stake; and now that an army should be ready to take the field, calculated at fifty thousand men —certainly less, but perhaps really thirty—clothed, equipped, disciplined, and the national spirit roused, all this speaks loudly for England, and betrays a vigorous policy at least. . . .

'*Saturday.*—I made out so long a story last night about our *protégés* that you will hardly expect I should resume the subject this morning. I have, however, only told you of one corps, of about 1,600 men, that I have seen. Since they marched out of the town, the 3rd and 15th Battalions of the line have arrived from Coimbra, and have made me if possible more presumptuous than ever; they are all young, full of spirit, and with discipline enough, even now, to promise everything that ought to be expected from them. There is no ascertaining what the plans are, there are so many idle reports, but we hear it is intended that the Portuguese should be put to the trial in the first instance. I had rather they should keep them up till an opportunity should offer of giving them a little confidence in an indirect manner; such as allowing them to take a subordinate part in whatever the British may at first happen to be engaged in, and should anything of some little consequence take place, nothing could be so easy as for those at the head of affairs to heap a heavier load of applause upon our *élèves* than they might seriously deserve. It is easy to deceive men on these occasions, for you will always find them of the party to carry on the cheat. I am only afraid our English blunderers will take pains to undeceive them when their momentary interests are concerned. But if we would have them overstep the modesty of nature at the outset, we shall perhaps be disappointed, and be at a loss to recover their scattered spirits, after suffering them to fail in a situation where it is hardly reason-

able to expect they should succeed. The great object is to give them a confidence in themselves; it is impossible they should have it now, for they do not know their own powers; and if this can be done, as I think it can, without risking everything which the proposed plan goes near to do, there is certainly a choice; and I do think Lord Wellington will make it to his advantage. Nothing will be more politic than to let them loose when they are prepared for it, and give them the post of honour then, as often as you please, for the fire only burns with fresher ardour after it has gained a certain head, from the application of those very means which would have extinguished it altogether if applied at an earlier period. We shall see; and, after all, if we should chance to bungle it a little at the beginning, you must not mind that, for we are in excellent spirits. I have run out to such an immeasurable length that I can venture to say very little now about our present abode; it deserves, however, much to be said of it, and we are rather gainers than losers, in every respect, since we left Leyria. The country is, to the full, as beautiful, and the markets better supplied. It is a very ancient town, known to the Romans, I believe, as a city, under the name of Narbancia; the river Narbonne, at that time, ran through it. The town is now wholly on the right bank. It is larger than Leyria, and much handsomer. It was here that Marshal Beresford organised almost all the Portuguese army. The people are very obliging, and behave as they should to the English. There is one of the finest convents here (which I have not yet had time to go over) in the whole country; the three regiments are quartered in it, and the officers in private houses in the town. I have an excellent château, and have an opportunity of hearing a great deal of good Portuguese talked every day. I return bad for good at present, but they tell me that there is a prospect of, as well as room for, improvement in me. My poor Doctor Barbosa I left in sorry spirits, and looking out with a great deal of solicitude for the completion of the catalogue in the arrival of Russians and Turks; and, in fact, I believe he had as soon see these as any of the rest, for he cares

very little about any of us. However, there is more of imaginary than of real mischief done to a neighbourhood by the continual passage of troops through it; unless indeed they come for purposes of devastation; in other cases, the people must be enriched, and thrown into exertion by it. Thank you for the account you gave me of the Duke of Cumberland. I hope he continues to recover, and am still curious to know what could have induced the assassin to take so decided a part, which he certainly performed most clumsily.[1] I am most happy to find that aunt and Goully continue well, and as you tell me that Princess Amelia is still getting better, I hope this will relieve you all from a great deal of anxiety.'

'Thomar: July 15, 1810.

'I shall write to you very frequently if we are allowed to remain at Thomar. No people are so idle as those who are every moment expecting to be called into activity. This is a sort of fairyland for us at first sight, and I am anxious to report to you my visions while an opportunity is permitted me. Whatever the advocates for a quiet life may tell us, I am positive that wandering about makes observers of a great many who would never have been such under other circumstances, for we seem all of us to be naturally more curious about what happens at a distance from home than about what is immediately near us and always before our eyes; often I am sure through vanity and a desire of giving a piece of information to our compatriots, which they might never arrive at without being at the same pains.

'At all events, I think it is not likely that a man who has

[1] This refers to the attempted assassination of H.R.H. Ernest Augustus, Duke of Cumberland. On the night of May 30–31, 1810, when asleep in bed, he was assailed by some villain with a sword and was wounded in several places. The household was aroused, and on the porter going to call the Duke's Piedmontese valet Sellis, the door of his room was found locked, and no answer being given the door was burst open and Sellis was found dead in his bed with his throat cut from ear to ear. There seemed to be no doubt that he was the would-be assassin, using the Duke's own sabre, and that when the alarm was given at his door, he, in fear, had committed suicide. The inquest returned a verdict of *felo de se*, but the whole affair was most mysterious.

indulged himself in observing a good deal in other countries, from whatever motive, should give up the practice when he returns to his own; for besides the influence of habit and other inducements, a certain *esprit de corps* will generally keep him in motion, and make him anxious to compare with advantage what he finds here with what he has seen elsewhere; and so much in favour of vagabondising. Not a word since I last wrote to you, either from armies or fortresses; my story will therefore treat of very little else than Thomar and myself; indeed, to talk of myself I must talk as well of Thomar, and the family I am living with, for my day's work is very much interwoven with theirs. The master of my house was a Don something de Silveira; he died a very short time ago, and is spoken of as a man of talent and rare qualities, rare indeed in this country if they were his. His widow and son occupy the house, and my being in it would be very embarrassing under such circumstances (for she still continues to seclude herself), if the house were not so large as to obviate every inconvenience. The son frequently pays me a visit during the day, and as he talks better Portuguese than French, he suffers me to jargonise with him, until I am forced to call in a little French to my rescue. He is a fine young man, and really has a tutor, who attends him daily. He has besides a cousin, of whom I see still more, and he talks not a word of French, so that my situation here is desperate indeed. He is a young man of seven or eight and twenty, and is a member of the large convent here, of the Order di Christo; it is the first of the order, and one of the principal ones in the country; and I understand that none but men of rank and interest can have admission to it. Their possessions are extensive, and their wealth I believe very great; though they would have us to understand that the French owe them a good deal.

'However, so much has been laid to the account of these dragons since they left the country, which they certainly plundered a good deal, that they have produced annihilation in many instances, if one is to believe all; for they are sometimes charged with having laid violent hands upon what they certainly

never took away with them, and could with difficulty have turned into anything else to serve their purposes; and yet all traces of them are gone. Let us rather believe such things never existed than that the French were conjurors.

'Formerly, I believe, the society in this convent was very numerous; at present it consists of about twenty; they seem, however, to be more at their ease than friars in general, and my friend gets leave of absence as often, and for as long a time, as he chooses.

'His life after all seems to be a very indolent one; he reads sometimes, but, if I am not mistaken, rather *pour passer le temps* than for any serious purpose.

'. . . One reason why the affairs of these countries are so rarely conducted by men of talent appears to be that so many more from those classes where talents are generally looked for in other countries are by institution rendered incapable of meddling with public affairs. If one were not certain of being assured of the origin, we might be tempted to regret that some reformation hereabouts should not have been proposed by us at the beginning as being in part payment for lending them our assistance to get out of their present scrape; but I confess this would be requiring that we should be much better than our neighbours; and I believe after all such a bargain would hardly have accelerated the object in view, for it seems to be the business of all great revolutions to extirpate old abuses and to establish new ones; and I dare say this will not be an exception.

'I have not told you yet how my hotel is situated. I take up the greater part of one side of the principal square. Opposite to me is the post-office, on my right hand the church, and on my left the gaol and town hall. There is a market under my window every day, and a very noisy one. Two or three couriers generally arrive, from some part or other, in the course of the day; these gentlemen ride upon mules, at a canter, the whole stage. The mules have bells hung at each ear, and the rider wears a slouched hat and a whip. The whip is a long one, and serves in the double capacity of whip and horn

with us; for no sooner has the rider arrived within a hearing and a half of the post-office, than off goes the whip, and you would fancy, did you see and hear, that considerable bets had been laid upon his separating the thong from the stick before he reached the post-office.

'I have made some inquiries touching my neighbours on the left, for I see them every day with their legs and arms hanging through the grating. I find the society is regulated quite upon revolutionary principles: *égalité*, the motto; debtors, deserters from the army, rogues and conjurors, are all brought to the same level, and inhabit the same apartment. This practice is, I believe, general throughout Spain and Portugal, and shows a lamentable want of taste in the government; there should be some preference in the case. The church on my right is very noisy twice a day, and sometimes oftener. The calls for mass are longer, and with many more bells than we employ for a like purpose.

'The people here seem in better spirits than at Leyria. Here the whole Portuguese army has been organised and disciplined, and their confidence is increased with the success of their operations. At Leyria they have been put out of humour by the constant passage of troops through the town.

'I go to see a parade every evening of the Portuguese regiments. I own that till last Thursday I never took much interest in this kind of spectacle. The drill-ground is *faite à peindre*, an extensive plain, bounded on one side by the river, and on all others by the lofty hills which surround Thomar, and on which, to our great delight as a spectacle, but no less great annoyance as a quarter, stands the convent where our soldiers are lodged, for it is a sad fag for the legs. But the prospect of the monastery, with the Gothic architecture of its church and the ruins of an extensive Moorish castle all in one mass, and in so commanding a situation, composes a magnificent *coup d'œil* from the plain I am speaking of. This drill-ground has already become respectable in our eyes; it will be venerable by-and-bye if all our plans succeed, and travellers will come to look at it, as the cradle of Portuguese independence.

We, notwithstanding, had a donkey race upon it yesterday, and in the course of a few days intend making a grand match of mules and donkeys, and all the animals, biped and quadruped, that are disposed to run. I have two mules that ought to cut a great figure in this *rencontre*, and I shall make you acquainted with my success when I write again.

'The evenings are beautiful, and the regiments having both of them good music, the parades are numerously attended. There is a Portuguese general here, named Miranda, who also helps to make up the show. He does not interfere much, so little, indeed, that one is tempted to suppose it all a humbug.

'The people appear to look on with much delight, and among the most animated with something more than hope, approaching to exultation painted upon their countenances. If with them, it had need be so with us; and, indeed, I have observed that some of our party are ingenuous enough not to conceal their sensibility on this point, but rather to make a display of it. They would do better, perhaps, to dissemble on such occasions. These people are indebted beyond measure to us, and they know it; and it is wonderful to me, that we should not be more jealous of offending them than we sometimes are. Nowhere is our ill-breeding (to use it gently) more conspicuous than when we intrude upon their religious ceremonies as we sometimes do. One should think that much training would not be requisite to enable one to behave with decency in a solemn assembly, even although we did not take part in its ceremonies, which it is by no means necessary we should do, and which would be rather insulting than complimentary to affect. At the same time, if we go as observers—and wherever I have been both the people and the priesthood seem rather disposed to encourage than to oppose this—it should not be as people go to Drury Lane, to cry down or support a new play, or even as you went to Covent Garden during the fracas of glorious memory; and yet I have seen my messmates make their appearance nearly in the same humour, as if it were impossible to conform with all that is going forward. I really believe it is often done through ignorance; but it is

very disgusting. After all, I should prefer this trial to any other if I wished to judge of a person's manners, and consequently of his good sense. Some polite man says, "Show me a man at table that I may judge of him." I would say, Show me a Protestant in a Catholic or even in a Mahommedan church, and that is where I think so much nicety is required.

'*Monday morning, 16th.*—We are just returned from a pretty long walk, over wild thyme, lavender, myrtle in blossom, and marjoram, and a thousand other melodoriferous herbs that I am at a loss to name. In this sense, indeed, these excursions are very sweet, but a great bore upon the whole, for we kick up dust enough to poison all the perfumes of Araby the blest.

'I think we have a chance of remaining here longer than we at first had reason to expect.'

To Major Henry Gomm, 6th Regiment.

'Thomar: July 19, 1810.

'To stir out during the heat of the day, unless by special order, is accounted an act of heroism, and bordering very near upon insanity. When you observe, however, to the Portuguese that it is hot, they say *alguma cousa*, so that by the time they will allow it to be piping, it will be intolerable for us; it is certain, however, I never felt it hotter during the whole of our summer campaign than it is now. I have been here about ten days. The brigade formed of the 9th, 2nd battalion 38th, and 3rd Royals marched from Lisbon about three weeks ago to Leyria, where we remained a week, and from Leyria we marched to Thomar. We have been joined here by two Portuguese battalions of the Line, the 3rd and 15th, and shall certainly remain fixed till the enemy make some important movement. You will see immediately upon the map that this is an excellent point for a reserve; we are come-at-able for all parties. You know how the armies are stationed at present: General Hill (who, by-the-bye, we learn by a letter received here yesterday from himself, is in hourly expectation of the

French force opposed to him, under Regnier, crossing the Tagus, and threatening on the side of Idanha and Castel Branco), is now at Portalègre, with, I should think, between 8,000 and 10,000 men. The French are, I believe, superior in numbers. Should they push for Abrantes, south of the Tagus, we can at all times reinforce him, and more readily still if he crosses the Tagus, in consequence of a similar movement on the part of the French; or we can be in reserve behind the Zezere, which is at all seasons of the year a strong position, and cover any hazardous operation. We are accordingly busily reconnoitring, and, I believe, going to strengthen the different passes of the Zezere. General Leith has lately arrived here to take the command, and we may properly be called the army of the centre, or of the Zezere. The English Brigade I take to be about 1,800, and the Portuguese about 1,600. There is, besides, the Lusitanian Legion of nearly the same force within a few leagues of us. Lord Wellington is at Alverca, a league or two from Almeida. Ciudad Rodrigo is said to have fallen; we have no certain information, but it is very probable. You wish me to say to you what I think of our prospects here. I declare to you I see everything to encourage, and nothing to make us despair. A Portuguese army of nearly 30,000 men has been got together and disciplined with wonderful activity, and the thing could not have been done if the spirits of the people were not with us; and, I have no doubt, they will behave most handsomely if they are managed with address; but they must be handled with delicacy, and, above all things, we should avoid exposing them to a serious failure at the outset.

'The regiments here are perfectly well-behaved, and in the field go through nearly the same movements that we do, and nearly with the same precision; they are, however, less advanced than many of the battalions on the frontier. This is the place where Beresford organised nearly the whole of the Portuguese army. We like the town excessively; we are rather too crowded in it, but there is plenty to eat and drink, and were it not for an epidemic complaint which rages violently

through the whole brigade, called a scarcity of money, we should fare as we pleased. As it is, we disclaim all luxuries on the eve of a campaign. I hardly think you came near this place while you were on the move here; it is a very old town.

'I don't know whether you recollect an old horse I had at Canterbury; I gave five-and-twenty pounds for him a year ago, and I am offered now two hundred and twenty dollars for him. I am still doing major's duty, and he is therefore a great treasure, so the dollars have no temptation whatever for me.

'*Wednesday, 20th.*—General Hill has, I find, moved to Alpalhão, and expects the French will cross the Tagus at Alcantara. He will then do the same at Villaflor. We are ordered, of course, to be on the alert here.'

To his Sister.

'Thomar: July 20, 1810.

'I have just been obliged to "abandon dwelling," and knock under to the high destinies of a much greater man than myself. General Leith arrived here a day or two ago to take the command of the army of the Zezere, and he has positively ousted me. If I take it all in good part, you must recollect it was part of the bargain when I 'listed, and I have promised myself ample revenge upon the rising generation; the connoisseurs, however, are only surprised that he did not prefer the house he has turned me into. At all events, I shall not be suspected of occupying bad quarters in either case. I have already given you some account of my first, and now for my present one. Somebody declares that the furniture of a Spanish house consists chiefly in cobwebs, mousetraps, slips of old tapestry lying about the floor, interspersed with fractions of pier-glass. Mine is a ready-furnished apartment, saving the mousetrap, and I should require a preparation much more serious if I had what I wished; for it was not longer ago than this morning, while at my toilette, that an undaunted rat cantered across my room with as much indifference as if the tapestry and all the rest of it were his own, and this a favourite

haunt of his. It is but fair to acknowledge that I was apprised by my friendly host, when I first took possession, that such things were, and in the neighbourhood too; and I accordingly piled all my inviting property, such as cheese, candles, and so forth, upon three-legged stools and large rugged stones, bigger at top than at bottom, such as you see used for a like purpose under our haystacks in England; so that I am literally in a tolerable state of defence against common enemies of this description. But, unless the fellow I surveyed this morning is called Giant by the rest of the fraternity, my defences will be altogether insufficient, and the works scaled without the help of ladders. He was like a rabbit, and, I dare say, a much more ferocious animal. I must say something more about my house, or you will think the general chose well, in spite of the authorities I have mentioned as having decided against him. The fact is the house is as big as a castle, and in the course of a very few years would, I have no doubt, make by no means a bad ruin. When I came into it I had the choice of "antres waste and desarts idle" (for I can compare the principal apartments to nothing half so aptly), but I rather chose three or four smaller rooms in a corner, which I can arrive at in less than a quarter of an hour after I quit the street and begin to ascend the staircase. We dine, however, two or three of us in the saloon, and we call the passing from my part of the world to the said saloon a walk before dinner, and no trifling one, I assure you. The master of the house is one of the principal men in the town, and one of the most obliging in the world. He holds a high public office here, which relates to the provisioning of the troops. It is fortunate for him his time is almost wholly occupied; whenever he is disengaged, whether he reflects on his fallen fortunes, or indulges in that indolent humour which they all have here, I cannot tell, but he loiters about as if the house was wholly too large for him, and he seems as if he really could be "bounded," like Hamlet, "in a nutshell, and count himself a king of infinite space." His wife died about four years ago. Before her death they had lived very extravagantly, but everything since has been falling into ruin—house,

gardens, etc. He has one son and a large adopted family, for all the poor children in the town seem to have free admission, and little ragamuffins are scampering about the house from morning till night. He sleeps in a corner of one of the large rooms, with his bed made upon the ground (very much the fashion here), and looking so unsettled that you would think he was going to pack up to-morrow and be off as well as myself.

'Did I not promise you when I wrote last that I should have a race to record in this letter? I think I did. Unhappy man that I am! fated to be my own trumpeter! for I positively won all that was worth winning in the conflict. To tell things in the order in which they happened. The punch began making at eleven o'clock, and the race at twelve, last Tuesday. There were two races, of three heats each. I was my own muleteer in each, and between my mules and myself we raised a subscription of twenty dollars; and as dollars *are* dollars now, and money the scarcest thing going, I am a very considerable man for the next six weeks. I have told you a great deal about the inside of my house, and now for the out. I shall not go far for a subject. I have next door to me the prettiest girl in Thomar, and when she looks out of the window and I look out of the window there are not above three long long yards between her nose and mine. I don't know whether I have told you we are great lookers-out of window in Portugal. It is a primary occupation among the ladies, and so zealous have they been sometimes in the pursuit of it as to sacrifice every other, with very little reserve, to this favourite occupation. They besides spit a good deal on these occasions; whether purposely, to give an interest to the *tout ensemble* (for they lean out two or three together, always at the same window), or whether this is a foible, if such it must be called, proceeding by necessary consequence from such a situation of things, I shall be better able to determine by-and-bye, for I am getting into the way of it very fast. This, however, I am positive of, that I shall never arrive at that point of perfection in the art that so many of them have

reached. Nothing but the practice of chewing tobacco, one should think, could have produced such a climax. My fair neighbour has two sisters, who are only eclipsed when she is by. They both spit a good deal, and with much address. She is herself a sad bungler, and does not look out of window half enough for my taste. They play and sing almost every evening, and now and then treat me with "God save the King." I always make a low bow in retaliation for this, and I have been preparing a Portuguese speech, which I shall certainly give utterance to the next time I am attacked in this manner. Indeed, if I do not succeed in getting acquainted with them by gentle means, I shall be obliged to have recourse to violent ones, and begin sighing out loud by moonlight. You can have no idea of the beauty of our nights here. I have *vis-à-vis* an orange grove, and the moon has found her way through it to my window every night for the last week. She is now beginning to grow tired of me, and, unless I make haste, I shall have to sigh by starlight; but you will admit, I think, that circumstances are highly favourable to my plans.

'Our days have been for some time past the hottest I ever felt; and to sally forth in the sun's eye, without necessity, has long been looked upon as the test of heroism. The grapes are still sour, but they change colour almost while I am writing; and in the course of a very few weeks, I must say so figuratively, or not at all. We watch their progress with much interest, for we have scarcely any fruit at present. I have not yet said all that I ought about Thomar; it is one of the prettiest towns and one of the best situated I have ever seen. Since I wrote to you last the friar has shown me about the convent; for though parted by the iron hand of power, we are still great cronies. The church belonging to it is a fine old piece of architecture, full of paintings, with which the friars must all be in love to admire as they do, for the greater part of them are sad daubs, certainly. There is some very curious carving in wood in the seats where the choir is assembled; I have seen nothing of the kind so exquisitely finished. Unfortunately, the organist is unwell; I am waiting with anxiety

for his recovery, for they say he is an able performer, and the instrument appears to be of the first order. The size and loftiness of their churches in this country continue to give a wonderful effect to their music, and I have heard some that I could have listened to for ever. There is a cotton manufactory at Thomar, which they are very proud of, and I believe it is the most considerable in the country.

'General Leith has returned from reconnoitring the passes of the Zezere, and everything seems to indicate that we shall remain in this neighbourhood for the present. We are to compose part of a division of 6,000 men, and the remainder of our force will arrive shortly. Before this reaches you, you will have heard that Rodrigo has fallen, as everybody knew it must, and I dare say we shall soon hear of their advancing upon Almeida. The enemy are at present busily employed in getting in the harvest.

'General Hill has been moving about in the Alentejo, but merely for the purpose of watching the movements of Regnier, who seems inclined to cross the Tagus at Alcantara; and in that case he will cross it lower down, and have us to support him. You must have heard from Cadiz much later than any of us here.

'The days are so insufferably hot that after our morning business is settled I seldom stir out till the evening. I have made interest with my host to lend me some Portuguese books, and I am deep in the history of Don Juan de Castro, a Portuguese who flourished in the time of Charles the Fifth.

'23*rd*.—Rodrigo has fallen, and Junot is said to have marched for Galicia with 20,000 men. What this can mean I do not know; but if Massena means to move forward upon Lord Wellington he can hardly spare him. Regnier has crossed the Tagus, and General Hill is at Castel Branco. Our division of 6,000 men is collecting here. The Portuguese are encamped or hutted in the neighbourhood. The town is considered quite good enough for us at present; and unless the whole make a forward movement we shall probably remain in it. We are busy strengthening the passes of the Zezere.'

CHAPTER IX.

1810.

SENT TO PORTUGAL TO COLLECT INFORMATION—CONTRAST BETWEEN SPANISH AND PORTUGUESE ON THE FRONTIER—ALBUQUERQUE—BADAJOS—THE MARQUIS OF ROMANA—ELVAS—ALCANTARA—FORCED MARCH—BATTLE OF BUSACO—RETREAT THROUGH COIMBRA PURSUED BY MASSENA—THE LINES OF TORRES VEDRAS—SOBRAL—DESCRIPTION OF MERIDA—CAÇERES—THE BRIDGE OF ALCANTARA—MAFRA—CARACOLA, THE LADY OFFICER—PURSUIT OF MASSENA—DEATH OF PRINCESS AMELIA.

ON July 24, 1810, Captain Gomm received the following instructions at Thomar:—

'You will proceed forthwith to Portalègre, by the nearest road, in order to obtain the most accurate and speedy information relating to the force, movements, and situation of the enemy in front of that place and between the Tagus and Guadiana, reporting to me in the safest and most expeditious manner all the useful and necessary information which you may be able to obtain. For that purpose, you will employ such persons as you can depend upon the most, and you will communicate with the Marquis de la Romana, at Badajos—to whom I have written—and with the commandant at Elvas, if necessary, as also with [*left blank*], employed in a similar service. You will use all your vigilance and intelligence to guard against the vague and unsatisfactory style of intelligence which is so common, and take especial care to send me the most accurate information only: a confirmation of circumstances by collateral intelligence may, perhaps (when practicable), be the best check upon misinformation.

'You will communicate with me by Abrantes, etc., and take care, in the event of your advancing or retiring, to apprise me

of your movements, as well as to arrange for the forwarding or stopping on the line of communication, in the event of your leaving Portalègre, such letters as I may send you.

(Signed) 'J. LEITH,
'M.-General.'

To his Sister.

'Portalègre: August 4, 1810.

'Since General Hill crossed the Tagus with his division General Leith found it immediately necessary to communicate with the Marquis de la Romana, now in Badajos; and my mission to this place is, to be a sort of conductor between their Excellencies; and also to keep a look-out, and report whatever movements the enemy may think proper to exhibit for my amusement between the Tagus and the Guadiana, on the frontier of Alentejo. I started, fully supplied with the means of corrupting all sorts of people, but, to my great mortification, I fear it will remain a dead weight upon my hands; for not a Frenchman remains on this side the Tagus, and unless the Marquis of Romana thinks proper to move about a little bit, by way of change, I shall not even have the gratification of being made a conduit-pipe of. I am, however, very well satisfied with my mission, as it might have been one of some consequence; and as it is, I feel very much like a mule out of harness. I have lots to tell you, and hardly know which tale to begin at, or how far to venture into details, for I have seen a great deal that amused me, but to make it amuse you is another thing. I know there is a story book extant, all about Portugal, wherein the traveller detaileth the number of olive-trees within view to the right and left of the road, in the course of each day's journey. After some scruples of conscience, I have, I am happy to say (and so are you, perhaps, to hear), that I have come to a resolution not to be quite so faithful, but I shall invent nothing. To begin, then, I suppose with towns—Abrantes, Niza, Castel de Vide, etc.—a great deal of it very interesting, in a military point of view, Abrantes in particular, and which I had been long anxious to see. In other respects,

my journey has not even olive-trees to recommend it. At Abrantes I stumbled upon a commissary who dresses like an Emperor of Morocco, and fed me much better than such a one could have done. Niza is nothing, and but that I was carried there out of my road, to communicate with General Fane, it would not have had a place in the catalogue. Castel de Vide looks very big upon the map, but I do not recommend it to a weary traveller; it is very nearly as old as the hills it stands upon, or rather between. Upon these hills are ruined Moorish castles, surrounded with a sort of modern fortification, but it it is a very antique modernity. These hills are high, and the view from them very extensive and dreary; to me it was particularly triste, for close behind me was a chain of mountains, which we call a sierra, and which it was my business to pass over, and was only waiting to let a meridian sun pass over before me. Looking towards the Tagus was the flat, barren country between me and Castel Branco, and this backed up by the Sierra de Estrella, the "hills whose heads touch Heaven." I suppose you know that from the top of these you are within a stone's-throw of the stars. Shakespeare would call them "Heaven-kissing hills."

'On the right is Marvão, much higher than Castel de Vide, and which I must go and see immediately. There must be a very extensive view into Spain from the top of it. Portalègre is, after all, the only place worth talking about. Its situation is beautiful, on the south side of a range of hills, covered with the finest chestnut-trees; and all around it the country is studded with forests of olive, oak, and cork, to a very great extent. There ought to be much and very excellent fruit here, but they all say that this year is to be a repetition of the last, and they are to have none. My landlord says (and he has good right to recollect far back) that two seasons so unpropitious as these have been he does not remember to have had to do with. I give you warning that I am now going to set out with you on a tour to Badajos, to prove to you that a little liberty has not been given to me in vain. As I was directed from the beginning to communicate with the Marquis of

Romana, and very desirous into the bargain of seeing him and his army, and Badajos, I thought I could not open a correspondence with finer effect than by riding post haste to Badajos and presenting myself before him; and I could not possibly have a better introduction than my office furnished me with. I therefore left Tom one morning in charge of my establishment here, and having enlisted a Spanish captain for the voyage—a bit of an adventurer, who was beaten with the armies in the north, and again at Alma de Tormes, with the great Duke del Parqua, and lived upon famine for a long time afterwards, in the Sierra de Gata. With this gentleman, and a post-boy, such as I believe I have already described to you in one of my letters, I started last Saturday morning for Albuquerque, wishing to see in my way a division of 6,000 Spaniards who were quartered there, and likewise to establish some sort of communication with this place. In my first object, however, I was disappointed, for they had already marched upon Caçeres, but I had sufficient to entertain me for the remainder of the day without them; and if I were not presently going to describe Badajos to you, I should certainly burst out just here into a warm panegyric upon the Spanish ladies. Besides, the journey itself was not wholly without interest, although the road was rude and long; for whether my Palinurus had been a smuggler in his time, and was acquainted with none other than his own dark and intricate ways, or whether in the heat of debate with his mortal antagonist, the Spanish captain, he lost his intended route, is matter of indifference now. But certainly, from one or other of these causes he spun out our labours almost from the rising to the setting sun, and in place of travelling post, as we had bargained upon doing, the procession was quite funereal. Here, however, my travels begin to be most interesting. If you trace my route upon the map, first to Albuquerque, thence to Campo Mayor, Badajos, Elvas, and so by the shortest way home, through Santa Olaia and Assumar, you will find that I have crossed the frontier with very little ceremony, and have had the finest opportunity in the world of observing the marked difference there exists between the manners of the two

people. It is, certainly, a mistaken notion, and one which supposes anything else to be acted upon but our own nature, if we imagine that neighbouring nations lose their distinguishing characters insensibly as they approach each other. I hardly know where such a course of things can have place, excepting, perhaps, where one is wholly dependent upon, and at the mercy of, the other, and where contention is looked upon as of no avail. There, alone, I believe, we shall find unanimity and harmony in such situations. Or if two neighbouring States could be so prettily poised as to have nothing to fear, and to stand nothing in awe the one of the other, here, too, we might perhaps chance now and then to find an exchange of jackets and trousers take place on the border, and a confusion of languages, for some extent, on either side of it. But where there is a weaker strong enough to assert its independence against the stronger, there will always be mischief at work in these situations, and chiefly of all where the independence of the weaker has been forcibly wrested from it by its more powerful neighbour, as is in great measure the case here; for where great interests are at variance, the closer the connection formed by nature or situation, the stronger and more inveterate the antipathy.

'So that, far from finding a compound, wherever I passed on my journey I observed a most finished contrast, and one much more striking than if I had searched for subjects in the interior of both countries. For passion and *esprit de corps* are not only strong enough here to save them from degenerating into each other's habits, but to attach them still more strongly to their own than custom and education alone are likely to do elsewhere: it is all the difference between enthusiasm and method, passion and rule.

'The border towns, such as Alegrete, Codeçeira, Albuquerque, and almost every village, in fact, on the frontier, have the ruins of an old castle hanging over them, and I dare say a long story belonging to each, if I could have waited for it.

'They intermix Spaniards and Portuguese in some of these

places, but they do it like oil and vinegar. I have now tried to explain to you how they affect each other without foreign interference; but we have taken too active a share in their concerns lately not to have been of some influence. I know not whether we are innocently the cause of it, or whether it is that their southern affections are more lively and keen than those of the north, but they seem to hate one another here much more heartily than they appeared to me to do a couple of years ago, when I passed between Almeida and San Felices. The Portuguese reproach the Spaniards still for Talavera, and the apathy the Spaniards certainly displayed on that occasion loses none of its aggravating properties in a Portuguese critique; they declare it would have been another Pharsalia, or an Actium, or anything else more decisive if the Spaniards would have acted. I am not quite convinced of this, but I believe with all its consequences and immediate ill-effects its merits have not yet been fully appreciated. If the Portuguese army answers our expectations, this battle has saved the Peninsula; for through it Portugal and the south of Spain have gained time to establish whatever discipline exists among them. The Spaniards on the other hand are jealous of the attention we have for some time past been paying to the Portuguese in particular, and the latter are at all pains to convince them that they are slighted and themselves the favourites of the English. Our not having stirred an inch to succour Rodrigo has served to confirm them in this suspicion; and although they now affect to approve of Lord Wellington's measures in not quitting his position, I am certain they are in ill-humour. We do not, or rather we will not, change our sentiment in such matters so indifferently. I am convinced that they would each of them gladly see the other in jeopardy, and it is only upon second thoughts that it seems to strike them that the being of each is linked to the other, so passionately do they breathe ill-will. An Englishman, however, has a fine holiday of it all this time, and particularly in Portugal. Cicero, in one of his letters, mentions with pleasure the entertainment he received in passing through

these countries; but no Roman senator was ever treated with half the attention that an Englishman of any order meets with in any corner of Portugal at this moment. I could distinguish perfectly between the kindness of the Spaniards and of these people towards me; with the former it was courtesy rather than affection, here it seems to proceed really from gratitude. The Spaniards are, notwithstanding, much indebted to us, but they would give their ears not to owe us a straw. Certainly the pretensions of the Spaniards are beyond their merits.

'. . . I am still in Albuquerque, and have stayed there so long that I believe I must hurry you on to the end of my journey faster than I was enabled to proceed on it myself. Oh! the corregidor of Albuquerque!!! I was introduced to him at sunset; he was very blind and very deaf, and much too old to have anything to do with public business in Spain in the year 1810. He was, moreover, reading a philosophy book, and I saw full well mine was but a sorry chance of getting post-horses; for here it was all to go by favour, and his honour's studies discoursed of anything but philanthropy. He ought, at least, to have been composing to have made it at all sufferable; and he certainly did not disappoint my most desperate expectations, for the next morning he was good enough to encumber us with a couple of malicious mules, one of which contrived to unsaddle the Spanish captain, after he had borne him about a league out of town, and set off homewards at a canter, with the captain after him. I was unable to catch either of them, and made the best of my way, if so it could properly be called, while my mule amused himself with running me up against all the trees that could give him a chance of unhorsing me; and had I worn flowing locks I hardly know what would have become of me. I did not reach Campo Maior till after six hours of red-hot sunshine had passed over my head, and did not see my unfortunate captain till the next day, at Badajos. I think, therefore, I can reasonably answer for him, and certainly most conscientiously for myself, that had the worthy corregidor of Albuquerque been within hearing of both or either of us during the greater part of this day's

journey he would have had little else to do than to offer up counter-prayers for all the ejaculations we lavished in his behalf. Campo Mayor is a fortified town, and, as such, is literally Art *versus* Nature; for it lies in a hollow, and its fortifications are looked down upon from whichever side you please to approach it. To be overlooked is at all times embarrassing, and your ladyship's *sanctum sanctorum* should scarcely be provided against such an intrusion with more nicety than a military position. The town is good, and the Marquis of Santa Cruz, the Spanish governor, extremely polite; for when I went to lay my deplorable case before him he not only gave me post-horses, but to eat and drink to boot. From this place to Badajos I galloped over, with the post-boy at my heels, in little more than an hour. The whole country, after leaving Albuquerque, to a great extent is one perfect flat, including Badajos, Elvas, and far beyond, on all sides, and sown principally with corn; not a tree to be seen. Badajos has, in a great degree, the same natural defect with Campo Mayor; but here they have done all they can to bring Dame Nature into good humour, and have covered with a strong fort the commanding country; but in the other instance the outrage is too barefaced. This is altogether a very interesting fortress, but nothing compared to Elvas, of which I shall speak presently. The town is large and very handsome, with an excellent stone bridge over the Guadiana. I was introduced to the Marquis immediately I arrived. You may, for aught I know, have had a glimpse of him; he passed a few days in England on his way back from the north. Give me leave, however, to describe him to you. He is not so "near Heaven, by the altitude of a *chopine*," as your humble servant, and looked and dressed more like his barber when I was first introduced to him than anything else I can compare him to; with this exception, however, that had I addressed his barber instead of himself, I should have felt a strong inclination to have whispered him: "Do unto thyself as thou dost unto others," for he wore a very ragged beard. He was little better when I dined with him at half past nine P.M.; but after all my impertinent criticisms, I shall not forget to add that he

pleased me very much, and fully answered my expectations. I cannot think he has extraordinary talent of any kind, but I am certain he has a great deal of character; and if he is not a great man, he at least looks very like one. It was remarked of Louis XIV. that if he was not a great king, he was, at least, the best actor of majesty that ever filled a throne. I cannot say much for the majesty of our hero, but he has peculiarities which impose; and often singularity is mistaken for greatness of character, and inspires almost equal confidence. He is, besides, a most excellent patriot, and we may almost apply to him what Milton says of Abdiel, "faithful found among the faithless, faithful only he." On these considerations, I think, he is worth at least thirty thousand men to Spain, at this moment; and if I had the bartering of him I would not give him for them. He dined very well. I saw several of the Spanish generals at his table; among the rest, Carrera and Coupigni, both of whom have distinguished themselves highly. It is his custom, and I believe it is general in Spain, to hold his levée immediately after dinner; so that before we rose from table the room was full of visitors, and all the principal officers in every department of the division. He talks English, and is readily understood; however, I addressed him in French at first, but he afterwards chose rather to speak in English. He was not at all satisfied with what he called the precipitate fall of Rodrigo, and felt it, I am sure, as much as another would a heavy domestic calamity. It was fortunately Sunday, and the whole of Badajos walked upon the Mall from six o'clock in the evening till dark. All the women dress in black, and so well! You must none of you talk of dress till the Spanish women have held their tongues. Ask Goully whether they do not dress and walk and talk better than any people in the world. Badajos piques itself upon not being famous for beauty. This is affectation. I saw enough to convince me to the contrary. I have not heard them sing, but I have heard them talk; and I declare there is more danger in a single cedilla than in all the B's and G's flat upon the gamut that have ever reached my ear. Tell Goully I went in the evening to a tertullia (for the benefit

of the country ladies, an evening party); it was at the Marchioness of Mont Salud's. There were generally from ten to twelve people in the room, all men, with dusty boots and otherwise, who walked in and out just as they pleased. The Marquise is not handsome, but excessively clever; and after she had entertained the party for some time, and performed her part, in my opinion, fully as well as your friend Corinna could have done (saving that it was in prose), she sat down to the pianoforte, and several of the party accompanied her on the flute and guitar. I was by this time nearly exhausted with my day's work, and took my leave quite in character, in the middle of a piece of music. Had I waited till the performance was over, my character was gone irreparably, for I should either have fallen asleep or have been set down as mighty stiff and formal; and as the music deserved to be heard by all present, I was prudent enough to withdraw. I have never passed a day more interesting to myself than this, and I have not time or room to tell you the half of what I had an opportunity of observing *militairement*; but this at least may be dispensed with. The next day I went to Elvas, and communicated with the Portuguese governor there. I have never yet met with a Portuguese general that looks to me anything higher than a mountebank; there is no character among them, or shadow of it. Among the Spaniards the case is very different. I have already tried to give you some account of their chief; Carrera looks like Achilles, and they say he is full as impetuous and implacable. Several others that I saw have a very gallant bearing. The general, however, received me very graciously, and the next morning sent me off post; which was the greatest service he could do me. He had just been visiting Fort La Lippe, one of the finest fortifications in the world; but it struck me that it must have been very like the visit the young lady was so fond of paying to her favourite arbour: "for there," she said, "I sits and sits, and reads and reads, and nobody's not nothing the wiser for it." I was billeted in Elvas upon the house of an old colonel, who had been in the service eight-and-forty years, and talked to me about the

campaigns of the Count de Lippe in this country. The fortification of Elvas, I believe I have already told you, is the most interesting thing of the kind I have ever seen. There are three hills: upon the centre one stands Elvas and its castle; on the right, looking towards Badajos, stands a fort, which commands great part of the works of Elvas; and on the other side, upon much higher ground, and commanding everything, stands the impregnable fort La Lippe. Nothing but starvation ought to dispossess a garrison of Elvas. It has been taken, I know, and, I believe, by this very means. The town is the principal one of this province; and with all deference to the Spaniards, I think it fully as handsome and as large as Badajos. The latter is only three short leagues of level country from it, and they look down upon it with a sort of triumph; and, indeed, on both sides, their claims to superiority rest upon no better grounds, in most instances. It is disgusting to listen to the little advantages they take to themselves, and I was heartily sick of my Spanish captain long before I had done with him. It was entertaining enough while the Portuguese guide, or rather misguide, held him in play on the road to Albuquerque, but no further. After leaving Elvas, which is like a good position at chess, in my mind, with all its dependencies, I must bring you home as fast as I can to Portalègre; for I am sure there is nothing that I ought to detain you with on the road. It is flat; almost without wood; without towns, and ill-cultivated. Here, then, I am again fixed, and you will not be at much pains to discover that I am heartily pleased with my excursion. You will not be at a loss, either, to guess that my office does not give me much employment hitherto, or I should not have been able to scribble as I have done here. I have certainly not a vast deal to do, and although I am much pleased with Portalègre, there is very little bustle going forward in it, and till the English came here they have been very little used to troops. I am the only one now remaining in the town, and it is therefore fortunate for me they have left so good a character behind them, as they certainly have done. I cannot think I shall be kept here long, from the turn things have taken;

and I must only be on my guard that the division does not march for the north, and leave me behind. It is reported here to-day that the French are before Almeida; but it is bare report.

'Portalègre: August 21, 1810.

'. . . The last letter I sent you after I returned from Badajos. I have since been in the same neighbourhood again, and, indeed, all round Portalègre, to a considerable extent, as well for purposes of business as for amusement. The Marquis has left Badajos in chase of a French corps of about six thousand men, with three times their numbers. There is no faith in man if we are not secure here; in the north we have offered battle, and Massena says he is not strong enough yet. General Hill is in the neighbourhood of Castel Branco, opposite his old friend Regnier, who has taken for his motto lately, "Much ado about nothing." We are still in reserve, behind General Hill and the Zezere, at Thomar; safe enough, in all conscience. I hope you are satisfied with our position. How long I am to be kept here on the look-out is very uncertain; either till they drive my division from Thomar or myself from hence, I believe. I am very well pleased, however, with my post, so long as my friends on the other side the Tagus are kept idle. The Portuguese troops on every occasion have been behaving admirably, and they talk of puzzling the Frenchmen, and are as saucy as you please. Who's afraid? This mission of mine lets me into a great many secrets of the people that I should otherwise remain for ever a stranger to; and for this reason principally it is that I am pleased with it. They are very attentive, and show me all the civilities they are capable of. We shall all return home very saucy, as I told Henry the other day, if they accustom us long to this sort of treatment. . . . I hope you do the honours for me with the Douglases and Walkers whenever you see them; you know they are very great favourites of mine; indeed there must be very little taste where Lady Douglas and Mrs. Walker are not favourites. . . .'

'Badajos: August 31, 1810.

'Since I wrote to you a second time from Portalègre, I

have been moving up and down this country a great deal, and am only just returned from paying another visit to the Marquis of Romana at Salvatierra, which you will find a few leagues on this side Zafra; although I believe he moves this day into Zafra. The French occupy Llerena. You will have heard of an affair that took place in this tame neighbourhood some few days since, rather to our disadvantage. There was a bit of a blunder in the business, and we promise to do better next time. Vallasteros was determined to fight first, when he should have waited for company, and got licked. Affairs are, however, re-established, and, if the French will wait for us, there is a good chance of their being licked in their turn. They are scarcely 9,000 men, and the Marquis has at least 14,000. Be it as it will, I think nothing but the raising of the siege of Cadiz will prevent him from entering Seville shortly; his army is really willing, in good spirits, and I will even say in good order. I am going immediately up the Guadiana towards Merida, and, striking across the country to Caçeres and the Tagus at Gorravilhas, shall feel my way towards the bridge of Almaraz, if I find it practicable. But you may depend upon it I shall not put myself upon a par with French dragoons, nor submit to run a race with any one of them.

'By this means I shall obtain a knowledge of a great part of this country, and learn in good time whether they are preparing to advance any force between the Tagus and Guadiana. I believe they are doing no such thing, from all the accounts we receive, whether intercepted or otherwise. Our stars never burnt so bright as at this moment. The Marquis showed me accounts that he had received from Lord Wellington, of his having lately been put in possession of intercepted letters of such importance that a frigate was thought necessary to take them to England. The French are positively not receiving reinforcements, they are losing numbers daily in all sorts of ways, and, what is of still greater importance, they are losing authority. Massena no longer wears a Gorgon-head for the Portuguese, and his delay has given them all the confidence that a victory could have done. If he withdraws from the frontier I should

be sorry to fix any bounds to our prospects. This wandering life in a strange country, and at so interesting a period, agrees with me exceedingly well; and as I live, for the most part, like the owls, and travel only by twilight, the excessive heat of this season is lost upon me. I am exercising my Spanish every hour, and throwing my Portuguese into the background as fast as I am able.

'I am very curious to see Merida. I understand there is a Roman amphitheatre there, in an excellent state of preservation. Caçeres also bears a very good character. On my return from this tour, which will employ me perhaps a fortnight, I shall write to you again, and in all probability from Portalègre; as I shall have spent all my money, and must go there to wait for more, and to fall in with my letters—if any there are. I shall then direct my course towards the Marquis again, if I can obtain leave and my division is not translated across the Zezere. The banks of this river are supplied with plenty of the loadstone, so that (like the tale of the Castle) all the soldiers coming into the neighbourhood stick fast till they are helped away.'

'Alcantara: September 13, 1810.

'In my last letter to you from Badajos I promised to let you hear from me again in about a fortnight from Portalègre. As there is, however, little chance of my being able to complete my promise, I shall at least be faithful with regard to time, leaving place to shift for itself; and I shall have no doubt remaining that I have discharged the most important part of my obligation in the choice I make, for I suppose if I did not write to you within the time appointed you would set me down as having lost my way.

'I have been here off and on nearly a week. The French under Regnier abandoned the right bank of the Tagus three days ago, moving in the direction of Guarda; he is no doubt going to form a junction with Massena, and the thunder-cloud will shortly burst. We are prepared with waterproof jackets and conductors for lightning since the unfortunate fall of Almeida. The army are all in the highest spirits.

'I was the day before yesterday in Regnier's house at Sarza, and listened to scandal till I was tired of it. They are a great deal worse in this part of the world than any tea-table in any county town in England. I hope I shall some day or other have time to give you an account of my tour through Caçeres, Merida (the cart before the horse), etc.; Roman and French ruins in strange confusion; and the folks on the way wondered that I should ride so far, and ride so long, to see such ugly things.

'I am here with Don Carlos d'Hespanha, a general in the Spanish service, defending the passes of the Tagus. He is of the old French nobility, and equal to what the fondest admirer of this class of people wishes to see. Need I say more for him? He is greatly attached to the English, and has shown me all sorts of attentions.

'*Two o'clock p.m.*—I have just received notice from General Leith to join him immediately at Thomar, having been appointed a deputy assistant quartermaster-general, and attached to his division. The man who was with him has gone sick; and as I have been all this two or three times before, they are good enough to put me there again. I shall leave them to settle it at home. I'll be hanged if I asked them for it! I hope you think me very thankful, and as should be. Adieu.'

Here there is a gap from September 13 until October 9, 1810, and one letter at least has been lost. During this time Captain Gomm came from Alcantara to Thomar, where he joined General Leith's column as Deputy Assistant Quartermaster-General, at the very moment that it was summoned by Lord Wellington to proceed by forced marches to join him in Beira. It had been Lord Wellington's intention to remain on the defensive, but a battle was rendered necessary in order to give confidence to his own army, the Portuguese, and the Ministry at home. He therefore advanced to meet Massena on the Mondego, and on September 27 the battle of Busaco was fought. The English had taken up a very strong position,

when the French, under Ney and Regnier, attacked them; advancing under a very heavy fire of grape up the hills unprotected by any cover. The French losses consequently were very heavy, amounting to nearly 4,500, about three times that of the allies. After a most obstinate battle, the French had to desist from their attempt to force the position of the allies upon the Busaco range; but immediately after the battle they attempted to cut them off, and Wellington accordingly had to retreat through Coimbra, and over the Mondego, and through Leyria to the Lines of Torres Vedras, which had been so cleverly and yet so secretly constructed that Massena had not even heard a rumour of the existence of these fortifications until he was actually upon them. He had pursued the retreating allies from Busaco, and he suddenly found himself in front of unexpected fortifications which he was not powerful enough to attack, considering the strong forces intrenched behind them, and at the same time his situation was made the more critical by the cutting off of his rear by the Spanish troops under Trant.

What was the actual part taken by Captain Gomm in this battle cannot be known. The 5th Division (Leith's), to which he was attached, crossed the Mondego at Peña Cova only the day before the battle, and if Ney and Regnier could have had their way, they would have attacked Wellington at Busaco before he was joined by Hill and Leith. Fortunately, however, for the allies, Massena was not ready, and the delay certainly lost the French the day, for by the 27th the position of the allies on the ridge was doubly as strong as it had been. As it was, so vigorous was the French attack, under Regnier, upon our right, that the result of the battle was for some time doubtful. The part borne by Leith's division, in which was Gomm's regiment, the 9th, the charge of which gallant corps may be said to have changed the day, is thus described by Napier (vol. iii. p. 330, book 11, chap. vii.):—'Meanwhile the French, who first gained the summit, had reformed their ranks, with the right resting upon a precipice overhanging the reverse side of the sierra, and thus the position was in fact gained if

any reserve had been at hand, for the greater part of the 3rd Division were fully engaged. General Leith had put his first brigade in motion to his own left as soon as he perceived the vigorous impression made on the 3rd Division, and he was now coming on rapidly; yet he had two miles of rugged ground to pass in a narrow column before he could mingle in the fight. Keeping the Royals in reserve, he directed the 38th to turn the right of the French, but the precipice prevented this; and meanwhile Colonel Cameron, informed by a staff officer of the critical state of affairs, formed the 9th Regiment in line under a violent fire, and without returning a single shot ran in upon and drove the grenadiers from the rocks with irresistible bravery, plying them with a destructive musketry as long as they could be reached, and yet with excellent discipline refraining from pursuit, lest the crest of the position should again be lost. The victory was, however, secure.'

Captain Gomm himself was unhurt; but his favourite horse, which he had purchased at Canterbury, and had taken about with him ever since, was wounded under him.

'Duas Portas, between Sobral and Torres Vedras: October 9, 1810.

'The last letter I wrote to you was from the heights of Busaco, the morning after we had repulsed an attack made by the French upon our position. We were at that time fully expecting a repetition of the assault, and I believe I was twice interrupted in the course of my letter. They were, however, false alarms, for although they were evidently forming their columns, it was for other purposes than those of attack; before nightfall they had almost all disappeared from our front, taking principally a direction to our left. The following morning the whole of our army fell back upon Coimbra, and we have been since that time constantly on march. We are now entering upon our lines, and this is the first day's rest we have had for an age—if rest it can be called, in such weather as we have had since twelve o'clock last night; for it has rained incessantly, and it appears likely to continue some time

longer. Our poor men are now under shelter, somehow or other; but they have unavoidably been exposed to it all till just now. You know, of course, that since we have been in possession of the country we have given our attention to strengthening the passes leading to Lisbon, through the chain of mountains running across from Villa Franca to Torres Vedras and Mafra: this is the position we are now going to take up. The division I belong to, under General Leith, which is now called the 5th Division of the Army, will probably occupy that part of the line between Bucellas and Torres Vedras. At present we are not within the line.

'You will certainly conclude, all of you, from these our backward movements that we are running away; but you must not allow yourselves to be run away with by first impressions, and I promise you we are coming to a stand immediately. I believe, however, that what we have been about for these few days past has been so unexpected, and our movements have brought such distressing consequences upon the people of the country we have retired from, that not all our declarations will convince the world for some time to come that our retreat is not a run-away; and, to confess the truth, walking hard looks very like running, whichever way we go. We have swept before us in our march the whole population of Coimbra and the neighbouring country. Leyria is deserted, and, in fact, all the country between Coimbra and the lines is at once become a desert; the people taking with them whatever their means of conveyance allowed them, and, I can safely say, all leaving something to regret. In fact, the scenes that have crossed our way for the last week are such as were painted a great many years ago by the poets; and nothing to my mind but the retreat from Troy in flames can equal what the flight from Coimbra gave rise to. I have not written to H., nor to any soul but yourself, nor can I. This, as I have already told you, is our first day—or rather, our first hour—of rest, and I am expected to be at this moment going on with a plan which I have been desired to make out of the proceedings at Busaco. I have really had very hard work lately,

which you will account for without the necessity of my entering into the details, when I tell you that I have all the wants and greater part of the ailings of eight thousand men or more to provide for; so that there has been work more than sufficient for one captain, and responsibility (Heaven knows!) for at least one field-marshal. However, I have the best health, and what is to come will be less harassing. Only tell all my friends (whom I would give the world to write to if I had time, since I know how anxious they must be to hear one word from this part of the world at such a moment)—pray tell them how I am disposed, and how disposed of, that they may do me justice notwithstanding my silence.'

'Position on the Heights behind Sobral: October 18, 1810.

'I am stealing half an hour to tell you that everything is going on well, and promises better than any of you dare hope. The country we are occupying is another Thermopylæ, and we are in every respect prepared for its defence. The French have been in our front for some days, in possession of Sobral and the line of country about it. I am almost inclined to think they will not venture to attack us. Massena's conduct throughout has been the most extraordinary that ever was heard of. A corps of our army has broken in upon his rear, possessed itself of Coimbra, and taken 4,000 prisoners, sick and wounded; and will of course take measures to render any retreat on that side as difficult as possible. His situation must shortly be desperate. Lord Wellington and the whole army are in the highest spirits. I am very well; and my horse, you will be glad to hear, so completely recovered that I am riding him constantly. He wears the arms of Busaco, however, but they do not disfigure him in the least.'

'Camp, Heights behind Sobral: November 1, 1810.

'No change of any importance has taken place among us or the enemy since I last wrote to you from this quarter. They are still encamped along our front, but whether, according to the reports of deserters, they are waiting for reinforce-

ments or have other objects in view, it is plain they do not intend to attack us immediately. Whether they expect reinforcements or not, we shall certainly receive a very powerful one in the rainy season, which is fast approaching, and which will be an equivalent, at least, for any addition of force they can receive. I do not think, however, that we need be anxious for this support, for I am satisfied that, posted as we are, and with the resources we possess, nothing that the French can bring against us ought to render them masters of Lisbon. We begin now to feel a little settled in our quarters. A great part of the division I belong to is encamped, and watching over a most important part of the position. I am myself living in a village close to the rear of this encampment, called Dobaço. You will look for it in vain upon the map, but we are indebted to it for shelter from a great deal of cold and some wet weather lately. Our troops continue very healthy, but whenever the rain sets in for a continuance we must contrive to get them under shelter less equivocal than that they are at present enjoying. The Equinox passed over us, and in one of its roughest moods, just as we were entering upon our position. It is fortunate that it did not set in a few days earlier, for during the whole of the retreat from Coimbra the people found no covering but among the woods, and these were so continued and the weather so very fine (although dreadfully hot during the days) that they escaped almost from the dew. I believe the Government has done a great deal for these poor people who have been hurried from their homes in this way; they can never do enough for them. It is, therefore, gratifying to know that we have added considerably to the difficulties the enemy experience by this measure, and they complain heavily of our treatment on this occasion, both of themselves and the Portuguese. The French have not yet forgotten to plead in favour of decorum, at least.

'We have received your papers up to the 20th several days ago by some ships of war that made an astonishing quick passage from your shores to the Tagus. We are, therefore, in possession of your comments upon our late proceedings, and

I am happy to find you take our retreat in such good part, and are inclined to allow Lord Wellington some merit for the passage and re-passage of the Mondego, etc. This is really very handsome of you, considering that you have a vice inherent in you of being very difficult to please in this way. If you have received the letter I wrote to you from Busaco, I shall run no risk of recrimination from you touching this foible I am just charging you with, when I tell you that the 9th Regiment are out of humour with the despatches. They will have it that they did not *assist* in driving the enemy from the heights, nor had the 38th and Royals an opportunity of doing as they did; but according to their own story they found the French crowning the top of the hill, after having driven whatever had been opposed to them, waving their caps with exultation, and increasing in number every instant; they climbed up at them and hurried them down the hill one over the other, while the alarm was spreading to the right and left that the French had succeeded in breaking through our line. This you see was a good moment to arrive, but I can promise you that, if we had arrived a little later, our praises would have sounded louder, and what was really the work of ten minutes might in that case have been the labour of half as many hours, or it might not have been done at all. This is the way the Ninth tell their story, and I promise you it is a true one. You see how difficult it is to please all the world in a despatch. This is the second edition of an old story, but I am forced to load you with it for fear the nonconformity of other accounts should lead you to suspect that my first was a flourish.

'We hear again that General Brownrigg is certainly going out to India in the chief command, and that General Hewitt is on his way home. Perhaps the next packet will bring us more certain intelligence if such should be the case. I have every day something or other requiring my presence here, so that I have not yet been into Lisbon since we returned to its neighbourhood, but I understand from those who have been there that from being a little flurried in the beginning of our

retreat they have become quite saucy, with your tall account from Sicily.

'For myself, as an individual I am as well as a man can be wanting a majority, without a chance of getting it, for I am living with a most excellent man, General Leith, and a higher gentleman or a better soldier I believe is not to be found among us. I am very much indebted to him, and fortunately I find him every day more and more worthy of the respect which I feel inclined to pay him on this account.

'*P.S. November* 3, 1810.—The French appear to-day to be moving off from our front in several parts. I really think they mean to retreat immediately.'

The retreat was, however, not beyond Santarem, and here the armies remained watching one another during the winter months. Massena made his position so strong that the allies did not care to attack it, while they themselves held, thanks to the prescience of the English general, so unassailable a base of operations in the famous lines of Torres Vedras that they were in no danger of being disturbed by the enemy. Their worst enemies during the winter were inside the lines, and arose from the disaffection of their allies, the want of supplies in Lisbon itself, and the parsimony of the ministry at home, who failed to appreciate the wisdom of Lord Wellington's tactics, and the necessity of adequately supporting him from home.

To Major Henry Gomm.

'Camp, Heights behind Sobral: November 1, 1810.

'I do not recollect ever having been more harassed in my life than I was from the moment the division left Thomar till we arrived within our lines. I dare say Sophia has told you that while I was employed in Spanish Estremadura, on the look-out, they very graciously appointed me once more a deputy assistant quartermaster-general, upon which I was immediately ordered in and attached to the division under General Leith; and I had not been six hours in Thomar

when the order arrived for the immediate march of the division towards the Mondego. We marched incessantly, crossing the river at Peña Cova, and took up our position in the line upon the sierra of Busaco, and were not suffered to remain idle on the day the French attempted to force us. We had at this time in our division the Brigade of the 9th, 38th, and Royals, the Lusitanian Legion, and 8th Portuguese, and the Brigade of the 3rd, 15th Portuguese, and Thomar Militia. The British Brigade and 8th were particularly called upon. The latter have had ample justice done them in the despatches, and they really deserve all that has been said of them; but you will not be able to judge of the merits of the 9th without a more detailed account than the despatches give of their feats. The British Brigade was ordered up to the support of General Picton, who sustained the left attack of the French; the Brigade was marching left in front, so that the 9th led. They passed in rear of General Picton's right and centre, which were doing well; but on his left, where the 9th Portuguese Regiment of his division, and the 8th of ours, had for some time withstood the attack of the French with great constancy, the enemy still continued to push up the hill, and when the head of our column arrived, marching rapidly behind the ridge of the hill, the Portuguese regiments were in some disorder, and the French were crowning the top of the hill to some extent, and increasing in numbers every instant. General Leith was now at the head of the column, which was at this moment showing its flank to the French; but it was necessary to keep marching to the front till we arrived opposite a space where the ascent was practicable (for the ridge was so rugged that in many parts it was not to be mounted without climbing), and wheeling into line we stood opposite to the French, at the distance of ten yards. Both sides fired, and the 9th, being directed to charge, pushed over the ridge, and all the Frenchmen who waited for them, and drove the remainder at a canter down the hill. The 38th got a partial slap at them, but the Royals were not engaged. I assure you we arrived in good time to do this, for they were improving their advantage

rapidly; and on both sides of the breach they made the alarm was spreading that they had turned us, so that our good fortune gave us an opportunity of repairing the state of affairs in this quarter at least, and it was the work of a few minutes.

'My poor old English horse, who has improved wonderfully since I brought him to this country, received a musket ball through his flank; but it fortunately touched none of the sinews, and I have for some time since been riding him, perfectly recovered. So much for the 9th, and you see I am determined their merits shall be known to my friends and relatives, if not to the public. We made as rapid a march from Busaco as we did to it, but all has been perfectly well managed, I assure you; and we reached our lines just in time to receive the Equinox, which handled us pretty roughly as it was.

'Massena has been in our front ever since, and what he means to do is as doubtful as ever. He does not appear at all inclined to attack us. What with hills and men and redoubts, I believe we puzzle him, and we shall have the wet season at our backs very shortly. He must do something very soon, and I believe we are equally prepared to receive him or to follow him. I suspect we shall take the latter step, though with a good deal of caution. They do not begin to starve yet, although they get very little bread. We begin to get a little settled now, and people go in and out of Lisbon as if the French were not two miles off. Part of our division is in camp at present, close to the great work.

'2*nd*.—The French appear this morning to have moved off part of their establishment from our front, but perhaps they are only housing, for the weather is bad. We shall know more in a day or two, but I seriously think they intend to retreat.'

To his Sister.

'Camp, Heights of Sobral: November 5, 1810.

'As you tell me that my protected letters reach you at last, although you find them sometimes to loiter on the road, and

us Massena seems inclined to do the same sort of thing, I shall set about writing you a tale of other times, and whether it reaches you a day or two sooner or later by this conveyance will signify very little. Your last letters have brought to my recollection the long histories I sent you from Portalègre, and really I have led such a fugitive life since I once more set out on my travels from that ill-named port, that I have passed in silence over a world of country which I traversed before my return to Thomar; yet few, certainly, have left Merida, or Caçeres, or Alcantara without having something to record of each that might interest others in their favour, and I am one of those who are haunted with the recollection of them until I discharge this grave duty. I shall, therefore, sing of the venerable Merida, the stately Caçeres, and the ill-fated Alcantara, and unless you are very idly disposed lay down the paper directly, for I am going to gossip a good deal. Merida had become doubly interesting to me at that moment, for besides its antiquities, which had been equally respectable for many years before, it was now the cast-off quarter of a French army; and Regnier had established himself for some months within its walls. My good-natured counsellors at Badajos, however, were much surprised that I should choose to go so far out of my way to have the satisfaction of looking upon a set of old, rusty, and lately pillaged relics. The ruined walls of Merida; the bridge built by the Romans over the Guadiana; the two aqueducts raised by the same hands, one to supply the town and the other the Aquatic Theatre; the Amphitheatre, most perfect in its kind, and next in size, I believe, to the celebrated one at Nismes; the chariot-course, whose boundaries are still respected; the Corinthian pillars belonging to a temple of Diana, which now serve for the front of a dwelling house; and a triumphal arch, are among the objects that render Merida interesting. The bridge is entire, and has undergone some repair; the arch is perfect, and nothing but a convulsion of nature seems capable of stirring it. The aqueduct and the walls have "ruined" together, and the whole forms a spectacle dignified and venerable in a high degree. The town is not large, but there are some

good houses in it. The French had done great violence to many of them, and the revels of an unwelcome but powerful guest were of too grave a character that in the short space of two months no traces should have remained of fifteen thousand French; but desolated convents and plundered nunneries were among the wrecks of the storm they gave life to, although they affected great forbearance, and principally in Merida. I stayed here only one day, and went on to Caçeres. Of all the places I have seen in this country, or in Spain, none has made a stronger impression on me than this. It was formerly the seat of all the nobility of Estremadura; in fact, the Madrid of Estremadura. It is a melancholy town. The palaces of these noblemen are without number; every street has three or four of them. They are large, silent, uncomfortable-looking mansions; but proud and magnificent. Every one has the arms and Gothic distinction of the family it belongs to engraved in large characters upon the stone over and about the gateway, and on different sides of the building. I recollect over the gate of the Marquis of Santa-Marta is inscribed upon the stone, in very large characters, "Esta es la casa de los Golfines." It struck me very forcibly, and I find the Golfines are a very famous family in Spain. These houses—all of them—look as if they were expecting their owners from the Holy Land; and in Caçeres it requires little exertion to fancy yourself a sojourner of the twelfth or thirteenth century. There is a curious statue of Ceres, which is still preserved in a corner of the Square; it is very large, and of rude sculpture, and has evidently belonged to a temple, of which there are at present no remains, in honour of the goddess. The name of the place confirms this, for the word Caçeres signifies in Spanish, "Here Ceres presides." It is, accordingly, a fine corn country, and Ceres was not a favourite without reason.

'Brozas is much in the style of Caçeres, but upon a smaller scale. I took this direction upon learning from tolerable good authority at Caçeres that the French were occupying the bridge of Almaraz; and I preferred going to consult with Don Carlos d'Hespanha at Alcantara, where I was to the

full as well received as I should have been at the other place. I have already told you how handsomely he behaved to me. This letter is certainly doomed to be a Song of Lamentations, or it would never have led me from Caçeres to Alcantara. This place has been twice visited by the French, and with a heavier hand than most others; for they have always entered it, irritated with the gallant resistance the peasantry have made at the bridge. It was a ruin almost before these misfortunes came upon it; and now it affords only a miserable shelter to a few of the ancient inhabitants whose fortunes have become desperate. The Tagus has lost its beauty long before you ascend it so high up as this; and instead of the *pays riant* that attends it on either side from a little above Abrantes till it falls into the sea, it is here pent up between rude, naked, inhospitable rocks, overhanging their base, and backed up by a mountainous, barren country for a considerable distance. Over this chasm, and at a vast height above the surface of the water, is laid the beautiful bridge of Alcantara. Poor bridge! till very lately it boasted six arches, and is built of large rectangular stones, piled simply one over the other, apparently without any cement. The merit of this work is that it seems only the phantom of a bridge, while it is, in fact, a most solid and massive structure; and so light does the whole appear from above that the long columns of granite that hang down from the body of the bridge till they fix their foundations in the bed of the river have really the appearance of something depending from the upper part, rather than that upon which the whole depends; and so well does this dependence seem placed, that until a piece of violence was lately offered it, it seemed almost to justify the boast contained in an inscription, which the architect has deeply engraved on the keystone of a beautiful arch, thrown over the centre of the bridge, where he says: "This work shall last through all ages unimpaired; a monument of the magnificence of the Romans and the grandeur of Trajan, Emperor, Father of his Country;" for neither Vandal nor black man, with all their jostlings, has contrived anything against it, till a blundering Englishman came

across it the other day, and without any purpose, as all the world are agreed, that could render such a sacrifice worthy, he blew up the second arch from the right bank, and down it tumbled, to the great inconvenience of all who wish to pass that way hereafter, and to the utter confusion of the architect, peace to his manes. I speak feelingly, perhaps, in all this; for when I had occasion to cross the river, I was forced, from this awkward circumstance, to pass it much higher up in a bark, and to reach it by a much worse road even than that which led from Alcantara to the bridge. I came home along the ravines of the Tagus to Abrantes, and promised my horses I would never do so again; and instead of finding a resting-place in Thomar, it had already been converted into a starting-post for me; and I soon found that what I had been about was merely to put me in breathing for what was to come. . . . Of all the places I am acquainted with, merely in prospect, I recollect none so captivating, or which promises so fairly, as Coimbra. It was impossible to go into the town, although the division forded the river about a mile above it. The valley of the Mondego is celebrated by Camoens, and really nothing ever was so beautiful; and in the lap of this Coimbra is seated. The banks of the river are mountainous, but nowhere rude; full of the wildest scenery above, and richly covered with every kind of wood and shrub; while the lower part of the valley is cultivated in the highest degree, and varied with vineyards and fruits of all descriptions, and the numerous villas with which the sides of the hills are studded give a richness to the view that cannot be exceeded by anything. It is magnificent. . . .

'The whole army is going this day to Mafra to celebrate the investment of Marshal Beresford with the order of the Bath. Lord Wellington gives a dinner and ball. I am not big enough for the dinner, but I shall bring you back an account of the ball to-morrow.

'*Thursday.*—The revels at Mafra have ended. Everything was splendid, and, considering that we were stealing a march upon Massena all this time, conducted in better order than I

expected. Great part of the beauty of Lisbon travelled five-and-twenty miles to entertain us; and, with very few exceptions, must have undone, without resting, what they accomplished in the morning. Ours was a journey of fifteen alarming miles; and as all this riding was to be unridden directly after the ceremony was over, I declined taking much exercise in the room, but ate and drank whenever I could; and as I have slept a little into the bargain, lately, I am nearly re-established. I have had an opportunity by this means of seeing more of Mafra than I had ever done before, though not enough, after all, to satisfy my curiosity. It is a giant among buildings, and even among that order of them styled palaces. Very noble, certainly, but very, very *triste*. I wonder they have never thought of calling it "Mafra the forlorn," or "Mafra in the desert"; for excepting the park belonging to it, which is richly wooded, and contains a great variety of grounds and a host of venison, the country about it is naked and shabby, running into deep gloomy ravines, without wood or cultivation. The village looks as if it was built as a foil to the convent, wretched and dirty to a degree, and he certainly "upheaves his vastness," like a Behemoth among the little ones. This is really the case. Its character seems rather to be that of vastness than grandeur; and I have seen buildings that I have thought much nobler, though half the size of this. The library, which I could not see, I understand is one of the finest in Europe.

'I never talk or think of a convent that it does not call to my recollection the poor abbess of St. Clair, whom I met with at Montijo, on my way from Badajos to Merida. She was of an excellent family in the country, and from her eleventh year till the arrival of the French (a period of sixty-five years) she had never moved out of her convent. There was now little more than the wreck of it left. They had plundered every part of it, and the sisters had all retired to their homes; but she was living at the mercy of some poor people opposite to it, anxiously overlooking the repairs that were attempting to be made to it, and hoping

one day to reunite her flock and resume the order of life she had been accustomed to so many years, and to which everything else appeared so strange and new; but she was seventy-six years old. There was another character of a different cast, but equally unfashionable, that I met with at Salvatierra, Romana's headquarters at that time. It was the famous Caracola, whom you must have read so much of in the English papers. She is very young, scarcely twenty, and very pretty. She had lost her nearest relations since the French entered Spain; and, determining upon active vengeance, she enlisted under the banners of her uncle (a man of some rank, and then at the head of a band of guerillas), and had fought by his side at the bridge of Almaraz, and on many other occasions. She was once wounded on the shoulder by a sabre, and was made an officer in the Spanish service in consequence. In the course of her adventures she had always dressed in disguise. She was now in deep mourning for the loss of her uncle, who had been killed a very short time before in an affair he had with the French; and she came to Romana for the purpose of obtaining some reward for the distinguished services she had been rendering her country, intending to retire from the field since the loss of her uncle. We were particularly in luck, for she no sooner heard there were Englishmen in the place than she instantly came, attended by her squire (another female), and, introducing herself to us, gave us the whole history of her misfortunes and adventures. I thought with Walter Scott, "it was a fearful thing to see such high resolve and constancy in form so soft and fair;" and it was difficult to imagine how anything so gentle should not have shrunk almost at telling of what she had willingly encountered.

'I have nothing new to tell you in our proceedings, excepting that my old acquaintances the Spaniards, with the Marquis at their head, have all arrived among us, and occupy part of the line. Don Carlos d'Hespanha, I understand, is at Abrantes.

'They say Massena is sick. It is known beyond a doubt,

from intercepted letters, that he applied to Bonaparte for 40,000 men immediately after the battle of Busaco. I assure you it is not at all improbable that we shall be forced to wear the winter out in the way we are beginning it; and I am very much afraid great part of my division will be obliged to keep the field the whole time. They are to set about digging themselves underground immediately.'

'Before Santarem: November 21, 1810.

'The French left their position in front of our lines, I think, the day after I wrote my last letter to you, in full retreat upon Santarem. Lord Wellington put the army in motion immediately, and the 5th Division arrived at Cartaxo yesterday, two leagues from Santarem. An attack has been meditated upon the French position by the light troops, 1st and 5th Divisions of the army. It was intended to have taken place yesterday, but the heavy rains which began to fall at day-break, and continued almost without interval during the whole course of it, rendered the rivers necessary to be crossed, fordable in general, impassable for the time; and the attack has been, at least, suspended. Added to this, however, there are other circumstances which render an attack on our part very doubtful, and I do not think we shall make any. When the head of our column arrived before Santarem, I believe it was occupied by a very small corps, and it is certain that Massena left it several days ago. But intelligence has this morning been received that he has returned with 6,000 men to its defence; and the position is such that I cannot think Lord Wellington would attempt to force it if he thought it well occupied. The 2nd Division of our army has crossed the Tagus, and recrossed it at Abrantes; and will threaten the French rear, and perhaps dispute their passage up the Zezere, which the elements are likewise doing most wrathfully. It is doubtful whether they have yet been able to re-establish their bridge over this river. It has been carried away once, and the force of the torrent is such at this season of the year that nothing of the kind can rest upon it with security. I take it

for granted we are also looking to the right of the French in the direction of Rio Maior. All this may serve to loosen the joints of their position, and I really believe they would not stay at Santarem if we did not threaten a direct attack upon it. Their grand depôt has been at this place, and we followed them up so rapidly that they would perhaps have been forced to abandon a great deal had they obeyed our summons. We shall go beyond their hopes whenever we attack them. I believe they are, or were, retreating. They must be distressed for provisions. The 9th Corps is said to have entered Portugal, but of this we know nothing certainly Their movements have been strange if they really are waiting for reinforcements. We have taken some prisoners since we followed them. I am very well, and stand the weather like a ship. I have been fortunate in falling in with another excellent horse, which I paid for, however; but this is of little moment, situated as I am. I am, therefore, better mounted than habited, for my coats are all very shabby; but I expect a reinforcement from you, and shall fight in old clothes till they come.

'I am living in Cartaxo.'

'Torres Vedras: December 28, 1810.

'We played bo-peep with the French at Santarem for a day or two after I wrote to you from Cartaxo, and the 5th Division were then moved to Alcoentre and the neighbourhood. Here, I am sorry to say, we have had leisure to become very sickly, so much so that it has been found necessary to rémove us to this place and to occupy our post in the line with the 4th Division. We have been here very few days; but the change is so much for the better in point of quarters that I have great hopes we shall soon experience all the good effects our move was intended to produce. All, indeed, we cannot; for poor General Leith has himself been so unwell for some time past that he was forced to go to Lisbon before we left Alcoentre, and, not finding the relief he expected there, is now upon the point of going to England.

'I hardly expect him to return, certainly not for some

time, and I therefore regret his illness exceedingly. The army is losing one of its best soldiers, and there is not one in it under whom I should serve with so much confidence. In addition to this I have received the most friendly treatment from him since he has been in command of the division; and he is, independently of his military character, really so able a man, and so amiable in his family, that those who have been in the habit of living with him will not easily reconcile themselves to a change, however fortunate. It is undetermined yet who is to have command of the division.

'I was unwell myself for a day or two before we left Alcoentre, but it required little conjuration to bring me about, and I am now perfectly well. We have had four or five weeks of the finest weather possible.

'I have received no less than four of your letters since I last wrote from Cartaxo; you have all of you had so much to discompose you of late that it gave me very great satisfaction to hear from you so repeatedly, and always to hear such good accounts of aunt and Goully. How anxiously we have been looking out for some time past, and still continue to do so, for arrivals from England! The accounts you have given me of our excellent king have always hitherto been encouraging. I assure you we have all the most sanguine hopes that the severe shock he lately experienced will gradually lose its effects upon him, and that we shall have an end of these State wranglings, which after all have been more temperate than I should have expected.'[1]

[1] The reference here was to the death, on November 2, of the Princess Amelia, the King's youngest and favourite daughter. This loss was so severely felt by his Majesty that he could not think or speak of anything else. He was unable even to sign the commission for the prorogation of Parliament, and the power of his understanding was impaired to such an extent that his mental malady returned. On December 20, the Prince of Wales was accordingly, under certain restrictions, appointed Regent of the Kingdom. The wrangling referred to above was in the debate on the Regency Bill. Mr. Lambe and the Opposition had contended that the entire royal power should be placed in the hands of the Regent without any restrictions.

The Princess Amelia had been the favourite pupil of Miss Goldsworthy and Miss Jane Gomm, and a tried friend to Sophia Gomm, the sister to whom these

CHAPTER X.

1811.

TORRES VEDRAS—MASSENA DRIVEN BACK—VANDALISM OF FRENCH—HORRORS OF THE RETREAT—COMBATS OF POMBAL, REDINHA, CASAL NOVA — JEALOUSY OF PORTUGUESE AND SPANIARDS — BATTLE OF FUENTES D'ONOR—ALBUERA—CHARLES COMTE D'ESPAGNA—A BEAUTIFUL ENCAMPMENT.

'Torres Vedras: January 30, 1811.

'THOUGH I have not heard from you for some time, I can easily believe that there are letters flying about at this moment in search of me, and which will in the end reach me, for we are here so completely out of the world that they do not seem to think us entitled to the same attention as the rest of the army, so

letters were written; they were all present at her funeral in St. George's Chapel.

Some curious discoveries were made while the vault was being prepared in which the King intended the remains of his family to be placed. The most interesting of all was the discovery of King Charles the First's remains, but the coffin was not opened until two years afterwards, as described in the following extract from a letter written by the Princess Mary, Duchess of Gloucester, to Miss Goldsworthy, April 1813:—'The Prince went to St. George's Chapel yesterday. They have found the body of Charles the First. It was suspected when the vault was preparing for poor Amelia. It is a small vault near our own vault, and it was decided whenever our vault was opened again this small vault was to be examined. The Prince, hearing of this, desired to be present, and accordingly it was opened yesterday; they found it in a very perfect state, considering the hurry he must have been buried in; the face nearly perfect, and just like all the pictures of Charles I.; the head of course just laid on the body, but they lifted it off, and it is quite now ascertained it is Charles I., as the bones are all found, and the backbone of the neck which communicates with the head they brought us to see. It is all blood, and evidently been cut off. It turned me dead cold, but it filled me with respect and veneration, and I feel quite happy so good a man lies so near our vault. Of course you will hear a great deal about it, as it will make quite an historical event, for until yesterday it never was really known for certain in what place Charles was buried. The vault contains Lady Jane Seymour, Henry VIII., and a son of Queen Anne.'

that letters are sent to us in all sorts of ways, sometimes by headquarters (Cartaxo), in which case they are a week sometimes between Lisbon and us. At other times we get them by the country post, and then they are doubly welcome, from the risks they have run. Now and then I believe a special courier is provided, but it is rarely that we are considered worthy of this. If I were not well assured that you wish to hear from me, however sleepily we may be going on, I should ground my defence against the charge of idleness upon the notorious fact that until within these few days really nothing has taken place among us that could interest any of you. Before this reaches you, however, you will have received intelligence of two events that certainly will. One is the death of Junot, the Duke of Abrantes; the other, that of the Marquis of Romana. Of the first we have as yet no certainty; but the report has been very general for many days that he was killed in a late reconnaissance on the other side of Rio Maior.[1] Of the latter event I am sorry to say there remains no such uncertainty. The Marquis died of fever, at Cartaxo, some days since. Perhaps there is not a man in Europe that the Spaniards could not better have spared at this moment than Romana. Possessed of no extraordinary talents, he was, beyond comparison, the most considerable man in the country; and he had given so many and such striking proofs of his integrity and disinterestedness, that taking him as he was, perhaps without talent either for command or government, he was the most valuable man the nation had. The justly suspicious Spaniards did place the most unbounded confidence in him, and I really believe, from all I could learn among them, in him alone; and I believe Bonaparte would as soon have thought of bribing the sun to shine out upon him, and look blank upon us, as of bringing Romana over to his purposes. The loss of such a man to a nation in such a condition is incalculable. I am happy to find they are making great preparations at Lisbon for his funeral; and I therefore

[1] This was a false report. Junot lived for more than two years after the wound he received on this occasion.

hope it will be, as I think it ought, splendid, in an extraordinary degree. . . .

'The coats and boots and epaulets have never come near me, although you say they are in train for being despatched; pray tell me, when you write again, how they travel, and (if you can) when they started. It is very possible that I have imposed upon you a more difficult task than I was aware of at first; for although I know that things of this description are constantly sent out to this country, they may require some qualification that I am ignorant of before they are despatched; and if so, this may account for their not having reached me. I shall make inquiries upon this subject. I can give you no news; the French are expecting reinforcements, and we are expecting reinforcements, and we are better prepared to receive both one and the other, every day. Take care how you condemn this for bravado; I contend it is no such thing.

'I wish you could send me the account of our good king's recovery. We should indeed be very apt to give way to a little bravado for an hour or two, but I believe it would be an honest expression of joy.

'We have constantly reports reaching us that excite our interest, and among others we are told that the Duke is again to be at the head of the army. I am certain the army would rejoice, and I really do not think it an improbable event. I have not been idle, I assure you, since I last wrote. I have had to make myself acquainted with the country in the neighbourhood, and as the weather, which is now broken up, has been for the last three weeks wonderfully fine, I have committed a good deal of it to paper. It is rather an interesting employment, under the present circumstances, and (in the manner in which I take the liberty of doing it, rather fly-away than otherwise) not very irksome.

'Camp, one league in front of Miranda do Corvo: March 16, 1811.

'When I last wrote to you, about a week ago, we were upon the point of marching for Cadaval; since this, we have continued our march upon Coimbra, following the retreat of the

French; and the whole army united in the plains between Leyria and Pombal.

'The advance has been rapid, and the enemy has been disappointed in his attempt upon Coimbra. Colonel Trant has repulsed him at Condeixa. The main body of his army struck off from the great Coimbra road, in the direction of Miranda do Corvo. We have driven him from his positions on this road, and he has now the difficult passage of the Alva to attempt, in our face. His retreat has been precipitate from the beginning, and within these two last days it is become disorderly. Since he quitted Condeixa, he has destroyed large quantities of ammunition and military stores of all descriptions, and spiked a number of guns that he could not carry off. It is said that seventy pieces of cannon are discovered to have been thrown into the Pera river before he began his retreat. It is supposed his army does not exceed forty thousand men. We must have, at this moment, in the field I am writing in, between fifty and sixty. The bridge of Marcella cannot be two leagues from us; the outposts are *vis-à-vis*.

'The light division has been actively employed; they engaged first between Pombal and Redinha; and much more seriously on the 14th, between Condeixa and Miranda. Their loss, I am afraid, has been severe; they have many officers wounded: there is a fatality attending the Napiers. The French have been driven in every instance, and both English and Portuguese are enthusiastic.

'The enormous behaviour of the French, since the commencement of their retreat, beggars all description. They have burnt everything in their road, and as much as they had time to burn out of it. Leyria is destroyed. I have seen an order in writing (I think of Drouet's) to burn the convent of Alcobaça. I know not whether it has been done. Pombal, Condeixa, full of superb buildings, scarcely furnish us with an hospital. Fortunately we stand in little need of it, the army is full of health and spirits. We have had the finest weather possible since we assembled; to-day it is raining heavily. I am writing under one of the few tents among us.

'The 5th Division has not been engaged, neither have several others. Certainly, hitherto the enemy has been overpowered, more by spirit and management than by numbers. You will easily guess, from all I have just said, what our expectations are; a short time will justify or disappoint them. Never, surely, had we so great reason to be immoderate in our demands as now. . . .

'Camp Venda do Valle, one league beyond the Alva: March 24, 1811.

'Nothing very important has happened since I wrote from Miranda do Corvo; the French have continued their retreat, and their rearguard has passed through Celorico. Our light troops and the cavalry have harassed them a good deal, and taken many prisoners, but we have outrun our supplies, and the main body of the army is halted, and I dare say will continue so several days, to allow them time to come up. Deserters and prisoners estimate the loss of their army at four thousand men since they broke up from Santarem; it may be so, but I hardly think so many. The retreat appears to have been ably conducted, and, upon the whole, I do not think Massena deserves to suffer anything in his reputation since he entered the country. He seems to have been hurried on by the arrogance of his master into a world of difficulties, and to have made the best of his way out of them. It has been the work of a master. In some sense, he has gone beyond what the most credulous among the Portuguese expected from him, when he stood lowering over the frontier. I believe him to be the greatest villain that disgraces the age; hard, unprincipled, faithless; hateful to those in his confidence, dreadful to those in his power; an able, wily, profligate soldier. He seems to have settled upon Santarem, in the early part of winter, like a powerful demon, shrouding himself in vapour while he was meditating mischief to mankind; but as soon as the sun rose upon his aërie too glorious to be outfaced, he descended upon the land like a fiend, commanding the destruction of towns, countenancing the massacre of the peasantry.

'What intemperanee is there that he has not countenanced! It is not among the least of his enormities that he broke faith with Lord Wellington, a short time before he left Santarem, on the subject of an exchange of prisoners. I need not tell you the story, but his behaviour was base, to a proverb. . . . The age of chivalry is indeed gone. I do not understand it. Within a very few years, almost within our recollection, the French people seem to have traced back every step that nations make towards civilisation; and they, who a short time back were the fine spirits and cavaliers of the age, will have degenerated by the close of this campaign in Portugal into something worse than Huns.

'The French generals give orders for the burning of towns, and the French soldiers talk of the massacre of peasantry and women and children with as little concern as if they had been ridding the world of monsters, and had magnanimity enough to be careless about its applause in consequence. Since I began writing, accounts have reached us that Guarda burnt for three days, and is utterly destroyed. It was one of the oldest cities in Portugal, but perhaps this was its capital offence. We must have nothing venerable in these days. I know I gave you some time ago a long account of Leyria and its old ruined castle; upon my word, the castle is less a ruin than any part of Leyria at this moment. Miserable country! Happy England! whether she knows it or not. . . . I assure you I have almost lost the recollection that I have ever been unwell; and only that, like my neighbours, I am in dudgeon at all that is going on in this part of the world, I should not be half so grave as I am afraid you will have found me through the greater part of this letter.

'Do not be uneasy about my coats, etc., because it is next to impossible that they should reach me where I am, even though they should have arrived in Lisbon. I may add with great sincerity that Tom is much more in want of the brushes than I am of the coats; for no longer ago than yesterday he had his whole brush establishment stolen from him, and unless he steals in his turn (which I have strongly

recommended his doing, without loss of time) I shall be a pensioner upon the world till your present arrives.'

That Captain Gomm's estimate of the French behaviour was not rated too low, the pages of the historian of the war abundantly testify. No places or things were too sacred for the purposes of pillage. Southey says: 'Wherever the French bivouacked the scene was such as might rather have been looked for in a camp of predatory Tartars than in that of a civilised people. Food and forage, and skins of wine, clothes and church vestments, books and guitars, and all the bulkier articles of wasteful spoil were heaped together in their huts with the planks and doors of the habitations which they had utterly demolished.'

When, indeed, it is remembered through what scenes the writer had been passing during the last few weeks, one is filled with admiration of the modest courteousness of his mind towards his sister-correspondent. What a marvellous contrast in his telling simple brevity to the verbose effusions which are nowadays poured forth columnsful over a petty raid with an Indian hill-tribe, or an indecisive encounter with some naked savages! During that famous retreat of the French from Santarem, thus lightly sketched in Captain Gomm's letters, there had been fought no fewer than four combats with one of the ablest of Napoleon's marshals. In so masterly a way, indeed, did Massena effect the most difficult of all manœuvres in the face of a powerful enemy, that his tactics called forth the praise of Wellington and the admiration of Napier.

At Pombal, on March 10, the total loss of the allies was forty. At Redinha, on the 12th, the British loss was twelve officers and two hundred men.

During this combat, according to Napier, the tactics and manœuvres were a thing of beauty in the art of war.

At the combat of Casal Nova the light division lost eleven officers and one hundred and fifty men. This was the action which proved so fatal to the Napiers, and where the historian

received that terrible gunshot wound which paralysed him at the time, incapacitated him from further active service, and caused him lifelong agony.

At Fons d'Arance on the 15th the British loss was only four officers and sixty men, but that of the French was five hundred.

Sir William Napier says: 'Every horror that could make war hideous attended this dreadful march. Distress, conflagrations, death in all modes! from wounds, from fatigue, from water, from the flames, from starvation! On every side unlimited violence, unlimited vengeance!' Our own troops, when they reached the banks of the Ceira, were extremely exhausted, having suffered even greater privations than the enemy. Yet it was from such scenes as these that William Gomm could write these letters to his sister so full of gentle courtesy and so absolutely free from all egotism or bragging of the dangers and the horrors with which he was surrounded.

'Misarelha, Valley of the Mondego, one league from Guarda:
March 31, 1811.

'Since I wrote to you from Venda do Valle, the army has continued advancing, and the day before yesterday the enemy was forced to abandon the strong post of Guarda, with some loss in stores, etc., retiring, I believe, in the direction of Sabugal and Peñamacor.

'The army has halted yesterday and to-day. To-morrow the 5th Division marches through Guarda: we are uncertain in what direction, or whether it is connected with a movement of the whole army. I imagine we shall see nothing more of the French on this side. The premature surrender of Badajos has annoyed us a good deal, and may embarrass us a little. There has been treachery or shameful mistrust in the business. We have 20,000 men now in the neighbourhood of this place. Campo Mayor, we have no doubt, has been saved by them. We have received some official accounts of General Graham's business at Chiclana. The Spaniards are not behaving well in any one point. I have

already told you that the enemy estimate their own loss very highly during this retreat; some go so far as 7,000 or 8,000. We were falsely informed about Guarda; it is not true they have burnt it. The church alone was attempted to be burnt. It is not necessary to bring in calumny to our assistance to make their infamy immortal. It is true that the convent of Alcobaça, the pride of the whole country, was burnt by authority of a general order.

'We are all exceedingly healthy, and ready at this moment for any enterprise. We may now expect a continuance of fine weather. The equinox has just passed over us. We crossed the Estrella mountain the day before yesterday in the middle of it. You will, therefore, not be surprised when I tell you I rode in a whirlwind the whole day. We climbed like so many Titans. I shall write again as soon as we ascertain the direction we are moving in. We are living now in a crazy house, which the French did not think worth burning. But the valley of the Mondego is as delightful as ever.'

'Nave d'Aver, upon the Frontier: April 8, 1811.

'When I wrote to you the other day from the valley of the Mondego I believe I gave you assurances that we should see nothing more of the myrmidons on this side. They left Guarda and the mountains so tamely that we hardly expected they would make a stand elsewhere. Who could have foreseen that they would condescend to meet us in the valleys after having declined it in the clouds? But you will have already perceived that they can condescend to anything. They have, however, disappointed us, for on the 2nd we found Regnier's corps strongly posted behind the Coa, in the neighbourhood of Sabugal. On the 3rd we attacked him, and forced him to retire precipitately, and (according to the best accounts) with considerable loss. He is thought to have lost nearly 1,200 men on this day. Our loss does not exceed 200, I believe. The Light Division have again borne the brunt in this affair. The 3rd Division were very slightly engaged, and ours only showed what it was ready to do if they chose to wait for

it. It was not their interest to fight hard, but I do not immediately see why they chose to fight at all on this occasion. The cavalry have made a rich prize in Soult's baggage. We learnt yesterday that this corps had taken post between Almeida and Rodrigo. We have since heard that they were withdrawing altogether behind the Agueda, leaving a small garrison in Almeida with *desperate intentions.* Every story, you know, contains a fable in some part of it, and I hope you will take this for the fabulous part of mine. I believe it is true that Ney has been sent to Salamanca some days since, *shorn of his beams.* The conduct of the retreat was his, and it is very much admired by the *cognoscenti.*

'The behaviour of the French will be worthy of remark presently. They stormed like a hurricane through Portugal, but they are observing a different policy already with Spain. A proclamation was issued the moment they passed the frontier that no further outrages should be permitted. It was, however, attempted; and the first, and I dare say the only, offender was instantly punished with death, and left hanging upon the high road *pour encourager les autres.* If we enter Spain something of the same kind will be necessary among us; for although I really believe we are a very well-behaved army, we are, notwithstanding, accused of making free with whatever the French leave. The inhabitants of these villages on the frontier saved their lives and part of their property by taking refuge among their less persecuted brethren in misfortune in Spain; they are, therefore, more at their ease and give themselves greater airs in counting over their grievances than the unhappy wretches we have passed on the road, whose only complaint was the loss of everything short of life, and whose only object of execration was the atrocious Frenchman who did them the injury. Here they are more nice. It is true the French have their ill-will for all they have done them; but it is almost a doubt with me whether they regret the loss of property more than the circumstance of its all flowing through the channel of Spain. Certain I am that there is not one of them that does not forget for a moment his

private misfortune whenever he talks upon the subject, and with a burst of national pride he tells you exultingly—"The Spaniards were astonished at the spoils the French were carrying out of Portugal. The Spaniards declare they never would have believed that Portugal contained the riches they saw flowing into Ciudad Rodrigo." So that you would think, if you heard them, they consider their own loss as overpaid by the credit it had gained for their country among the Spaniards. Such is the national rivalship and such the antipathy these brothers in misfortune bear each other, that nothing but the last distress can make it a second consideration in their minds.

'There is something beautiful in all this. But if the curtain ever rises in England upon the scenes we have witnessed heretofore, I am sure you will all declare there is the best reason in the world for excluding all those who have served in the late campaign in Portugal from the privilege of sitting upon juries, as well as the butcher and the skilled in surgery. I dare say you do not know that by the laws of our country we professors of the knife are declared much too hard-hearted to assist in such a ceremony, upon the principle, I suppose, that "the hand of little employment has the daintier sense."

'We are halting to-day, I believe principally for want of forage.

'You regret in one of your letters, for my sake, that General Leith's health did not permit him to remain here. You cannot regret it more than I do, particularly as I dislike the person I am with exceedingly. However, this is not so great an inconvenience to me as you may suppose.

'Our cavalry, you will have learnt already, have been playing the fool at Badajos, but their loss is not so serious as they at first gave us reason to expect. We are doing very well, I believe, in all quarters; and General Graham's, if not a very profitable, seems at least to have been a very brilliant achievement.'[1]

[1] This refers to the battle of Barossa, fought on March 5, against the French under Victor.

'Aldea do Bispo: April 11, 1811.

'We have invested Almeida with a garrison of a few hundred men, and the whole of the French army are gone off to Salamanca. Almeida must fall immediately. This is the whole of my news. We are in a delightful Spanish village, and I am quarrelling with my best friends every day in their defence. I will tell you why another time. We rejoice that the King is well.'

'Aldea do Bispo: April 19, 1811.

'No change has taken place since I wrote to you four days ago. I find you have guns firing nowadays in London for other people as well as us. I assure you we are jealous of these gentlemen in the south that have succeeded so brilliantly in despite of so many friends and foes. I very much fear Massena the Great will steal off without further notice, and you will be hunting for him—nobody knows where—by the time you have recovered from the delirium of this last achievement. Until we received the English papers yesterday we had no idea of its having been anything near so splendid. General Graham has indeed answered all our expectations, and I am sure he only wants opportunity to do much more. He is a very superior man. I shall be very uneasy till I hear from this quarter. There is a very dear friend of mine—one whom I have for years loved with the intimacy of a brother—that I see mentioned in the Gazette as severely wounded: his name is Godwin. The flank companies of the 9th and 2nd Battalions were employed.

'Lord Wellington is gone to the Alentejo. There have been some ill-managed affairs in that quarter lately. In the meantime we have been employed in looking out for convoys, four-and-twenty hours after they entered Ciudad Rodrigo. It is a proof we ourselves are not upon short commons, or we should look sharper. Almeida is as it was. Nothing is done, nor seems intended to be done, beyond the investing it. We hear nothing further of the intention to retire beyond Salamanca and through Spain. It is, however, not contradicted either by word or deed since I last mentioned it to you.

'I am expecting my goods from Lisbon every day. After all the inquiry that has been made about them, nothing, I am convinced, but utter annihilation will prevent my discovering some traces of them. The letter you enclosed for me mentions that they were despatched from Plymouth to Falmouth, and I am just employing the only means I have had since we commenced our march of learning anything about them; so that I am very confident in my expectations.'

'Camp on the Heights before Alameda: May 8, 1811.

'We shall surprise you this time with a piece of news as grateful, I hope, as it will be unexpected. Massena advanced upon us, with his whole force, on the 2nd, from Ciudad Rodrigo, crossed the Azava on the 3rd, and came before our army the same day, drawn out to receive him upon the ridge of land lying between the Turon and the Dos Casas rivers; the left resting upon the ruins of Fort Conception and Aldea do Bispo, and the right stretching in the direction of Nave d'Aver, having in front the village of Alameda, and behind us Villa Formosa, Fuentes d'Onoro intersecting our line. Massena's force consists of the corps of the army with which he retired from Portugal, with the addition of some of the Imperial guards (infantry), and five regiments of cavalry, drawn from Valladolid. Bessières, the Duke of Istria, came with them; he is supposed, therefore, to bring 50,000 infantry and 5,000 cavalry. We can have little more than thirty of infantry and one of cavalry; we have between thirty and forty pieces of cannon, and theirs is more numerous, and, I believe, heavier. They attacked Fuentes on the afternoon of the 3rd, vigorously, and were repulsed. The 4th was principally spent in closely reconnoitring the whole of our front; and it was soon discovered, from the movements of the enemy and the nature of our position, that he meditated his principal attack upon our right. His failure on this side could be attended with no very serious consequences; ours must be disastrous. The Turon and Dos Casas rivers take their rise near this situation, and the country is the best adapted in the world for the movement

of cavalry. He availed himself of his superiority in this arm, and on the morning of the 5th he made the attack we were prepared for. His cavalry acted with an audacity that had not hitherto characterised them in this country, and the right of our line of infantry was forced to fall back upon a position where they would be less in danger of an assault from so formidable a body of assailants. They performed this difficult operation in admirable order. British, Portuguese, and Germans, all behaved equally well, and the right at length rested upon Freineda and the difficult ravines running down to the Coa. During this formidable attack of cavalry and light troops upon our right, Fuentes, which was now become the keystone of our arch, was assailed with all the vivacity that French troops are used to display on important occasions, and never was the constancy of British troops put to a severer trial. They attacked it again and again, and continually poured in fresh forces to support their broken attacks; but they failed decidedly, and the town remained our own, heaped as it was with the dead and wounded of both parties.

'More to the left they cannonaded us for a short time where the 5th Division was posted. We occupied the left of the line, from Fort Conception to the point where the great road from Rodrigo to Almeida crosses the ridge. This was done merely to engage our attention in this quarter, while the main attack was carrying on against our right.

'Our light troops in this quarter were engaged during the greater part of the day, with trifling loss on both sides.

'So the repulse of the French was complete, and the action over, by about three o'clock in the afternoon. It began about six, and was warmly contested the whole time. Our loss is estimated at twelve hundred, that of the French is supposed to be much more considerable. We shall know more about it by-and-bye. I should not be surprised to find it amount to between three and four thousand. The following day we expected the enemy would attack us at the same point with all his means, but he has disappointed us. We have continued within sight of each other since, and we have continued to strengthen our position without molestation.

'Yesterday it was reported, and to-day we confidently believe, the whole French army is retiring upon Rodrigo. They have withdrawn the greater part of their force from our front, and everything leads us to think they have given us up. Almeida may be expected to fall immediately, and we may then bid defiance to a much greater force than he brings, posted as we are. I hope we shall content you all in England; I promise you we are very well pleased with ourselves. The Portuguese and foreign troops behaved admirably. Happily, Lord Wellington returned from Alentejo two days before the advance of the French. Sir William Erskine, too, took the command of the 4th Division a very few days ago. I am delighted to hear General Leith is just come out again.

'We have had delightful weather, from the moment we took the field, and are all in the best health. If the French are moving off, we shall, in all probability, again resume our quarters.'

Never apparently was any battle in the Peninsular war more nearly lost than this one of Fuentes d'Onoro, of May 5; for our position was faulty, our army was exhausted, and the number of the enemy exceeded ours in the proportion of three to one. Both parties claimed the victory, says Napier: the French because they won the passage of Poro Velha, cleared the wood, turned our right flank, obliged the cavalry to retire, and forced Lord Wellington to relinquish three miles of ground, and to change his front; the English because the village of Fuentes, so often attacked, was successfully defended, and because the principal object (the covering of the blockade of Almeida) was attained. As Lord Wellington himself admitted, had Buonaparte himself been there the allies would certainly have suffered a signal defeat.

'Nave d'Aver: May 14, 1811.

'. . . Two divisions of the army have already marched for the Alentejo, the 3rd and 7th. Mine, I am sorry to say, appears to be one of those ill-fated ones destined to be left for the protection of the north; and as there is little prospect of

our having anything to oppose, and we have, unhappily, little left us to protect, the look-out is rather *triste*. There is an old story told us in Greek, that nature abhors a vacuum, and after leading so active a life for some time past as we have been used to, it is hardly to be wondered at that we should return to nature, even in these dissolute times, while we have shadows to contend with and emptiness to protect. . . .'

To Major Henry Gomm, High Wycombe, Bucks.

'Nave d'Aver: May 16, 1811.

'We flatter ourselves that our performances at Fuentes will have engaged so much of your attention already that a long story coming from me at this hour of the day would probably arrive only in time to be criticised upon the authority of fifty others dispatched more *à propos*. I shall, therefore, spare perhaps both myself and you by withholding a very circumstantial tale that I was meditating for you several days ago, and which would have been coeval with most others, if the Fates had been propitious; but a sudden move of the division at the period of mail-making perplexed me beyond redemption, and has thrown my production a century behindhand, so that I shall take it for granted that you are as well acquainted as myself with the leading details of this business, and shall take my chance of entering upon a less beaten track by talking to you of "hairbreadth 'scapes," of French garrisons, etc., etc.

'On the 10th, you know, the French army retired behind the Agueda, and we took up once more the cantonments they had just disputed with us. The 6th Division resumed the blockade of Almeida, and at midnight (the hour when all ill spirits walk abroad) the garrison issued from the walls. The walls presently exploded. Those who slept most like the dead were startled, and indeed everything, animate and inanimate, seems to have been in motion—but the pickets. They seem to have made it a point of honour to take care of the town, as nobody else would, and the French had greatly the start, before it seems to have been clearly understood that the town could not

run away, but the tenantry could. Part of the blockading division was, therefore, dispatched after the fugitives, and although it was near break of day before things were seen in their true light, the pursuers appear to have determined upon making up for slowness of apprehension by quickness of pace, and reached their prey before they passed the bridge over the Agueda, at Barba de Puerco. Several hundreds were killed, and nearly three hundred taken, and I believe they lost at least one-third of their numbers. The story, however, is one that we shall not tell so well as the French, and I am sure there will be more said about it than it deserves. As for Almeida, they have handled it very roughly; still, it does not appear to me to be so much injured as it might have been. They have run the mine completely round four sides of the hexagon, between the *revêtement* and body of the rampart, so that the whole of the masonry on these sides is thrown down; but the rampart is, with little exception, not much shaken. The remaining sides are perfect. Still, I hardly think it will ever be thought worth re-establishing.

'Lord Wellington left us yesterday for the Alentejo. The 3rd and 7th Divisions, which began their march three days ago in the same direction, are, we understand, halted in consequence of information received that Soult is in motion with twenty thousand men. We expect he is going to measure swords with Marshal Beresford, who is backed up with a host I believe quite as numerous. The whole French army have certainly withdrawn from this frontier, and, we even hear, from Salamanca. Rodrigo, they say, is to be served the same trick as Almeida, whenever it is ready. Massena summoned to Paris, without bringing anyone to help him out in his story. These are the tales with which they amuse us, who, I fear, are likely to be left at present for the protection of the north. We consist of the 1st, 5th, 6th, and Light Divisions. We, therefore, who have leisure to think, and little else to think upon, are curious to learn what impression the events of these latter days will have produced upon the worthy people of England, by the time Cobbett, *Courier*, good *Morning Post*, and *Chronicle* have

played their several parts. These adroit Frenchmen, too, can often make the worse appear the better reason; but I think it will require eloquence bordering upon sorcery to make their proceedings even intelligible lately. A *galimatias* appears to be their only resource. They will fall off in plain English. Suppose for an instant this to be the case. Massena scrapes together all the forces he is master of; invites Imperial guards, cavalry, and infantry from Valladolid; squeezes Rodrigo, and comes forward with all the parade that he thought sufficient to bully us into a retreat behind the Coa, and raising the blockade of Almeida in consequence; which place, by-the-bye, we are told was provisioned for several weeks when they left it. One would think that we had gone beyond his expectations in taking up the line of the Dos Casas river, with thirty thousand infantry and a thousand cavalry, while he threatened us with at least five-and-thirty of the former and between three and four of the latter. This was no mountain position either. Above Fuentes the ravines of the Dos Casas and Turon rivers, which included the ridge upon which we lay, soften off gradually into a plain, open, extensive, the most favourable that can be imagined for the movements of cavalry. He attacked us, therefore, on this side, and placed us after the affair of the 5th in the following situation. We had our back to the Coa, which was hardly fordable at this time, and the only bridge open to us was that of Castel-Bom, most difficult of access at all times, and impracticable for artillery. Our right was posted upon the open ground I have just described, prepared to resist all attempts that he might make between Fuentes and the Coa; and the whole force of his cavalry was drawn to this point, as well as the principal part of his infantry. He retires, after the two armies had remained four days in this situation, in sight of each other; we strengthening our right every hour by trenches, *trous de loup*, etc. The garrison of Almeida effects the purpose it seems to have had in view from the beginning, and escapes as well as it may. The whole army withdraws from the Agueda, and perhaps from Salamanca, leaving in Rodrigo a garrison sufficient to blow it up. Surely Almeida and the line of the Coa could

not have been considered as the alternative of all this. But I believe, after all, that he had no such object in view, and that the release of the garrison, after destroying the place, was all he aimed at. He had been driven from the Coa before the mines were ready; he seems to have expected that we had already detached to the Alentejo, and that his advance, with added forces, would always be the signal to us for placing ourselves behind the Coa. He was disappointed; but he still thought a blustering, rather than a serious attack, might induce us to some measure that would favour his garrison. He lost five thousand men perhaps, and found that still greater exertions were necessary to shake us. He said, in French, I suppose, "Materiem superaret opus." A victory that would go near to ruin us would hardly give him Portugal at this time of day. Our situation was a critical one had he been preparing to re-enter the country. We did not risk near so much as we appeared to do. Lord Wellington has kept up the dignity of the army and his own by not going behind the Coa. I think it is the finest trait in his military character; but, depend upon it, Massena would only have withdrawn his garrison by day, instead of night, had we met his views; he would have saved the smaller half that have remained behind, captured or slain, and we should have had French songs and fanfaronade made in honour of Lord Wellington and the army, whereas it is hoped they will now be confined to the blockading squadron. Who shall say, therefore, that we have not gained by the alternative, exclusive of the exploit at Fuentes, even if Massena meant no more than I have supposed; and if he did, I do not understand him. In that case, the sooner I bring my disquisition to a close the better for you and me.

'Nothing yet has been done about my majority, nor do I expect that anything will be done. This is rather a tender subject with me, and I soon become intemperate in spite of myself when I think of it: it will be more decent, therefore, to leave it. I hear, I assure you, very faithfully from Sophia of your achievements in college. I hope you have made use of all my books.

'Write immediately and tell me whether Sir Howard Douglas has received a long story I wrote him about a month ago. Remember me very kindly to him and Lady Douglas. Give my best compliments to Colonel and Mrs. Le Marchant, and all my old Wycombe acquaintances. Sir Howard will be glad to hear that Captain Belli, of the 16th Dragoons, and a schoolfellow of mine, who was taken prisoner on the 5th, is only slightly wounded.'

To his Sister.

'Nave d'Aver, near Fuentes d'Onoro: May 24, 1811.

'The detailed accounts of a sanguinary conflict,[1] but glorious to our arms, in the neighbourhood of Badajos, will have reached you in fifty shapes, I am certain, before this letter of mine can arrive. I shall therefore not attempt to assist you with any of the particulars that have as yet reached us of this interesting business. Indeed, our information continues to be very imperfect, and we are acquainted with little else than the final success of our arms and the magnitude of our loss. This, indeed, has been heavy. It seems to have been contended for on one side with all the impetuosity and energy of veteran French troops, accustomed to conquer in every field; and on the other, with the unconquerable and determined spirit of the English, less used, perhaps, to victory, but certainly less to defeat. The Spaniards, too, in this instance, are themselves again. Our letters say, "The Spaniards behaved heroically." I am impatient to hear all that may be learnt from this quarter; the more so, perhaps, as my rambles last summer made me acquainted with a great part of this country, and the scene of action is quite familiar to my recollection. In the meantime, ill news (which never fails to travel fastest) has already reached

[1] This refers to the terrible battle of Albuera, in which the allies, under Marshal Beresford, gave battle to Soult on May 16. The battle, though it only lasted four hours, is one of the most sanguinary on record. The French lost 8,000 men, whilst the allied armies had to deplore a loss of nearly 7,000. The brunt of the action was borne by the English, who had only 1,500 unwounded men left, 'the remnant of 6,000 unconquerable English soldiers.'

us, making us acquainted with the loss of many of our best officers and choice troops.

'Among them all, there is no one to my mind more deserving of general regret than the Spanish general, Charles, Comte d'Espagna. I think I have mentioned him to you in some of my letters from the Alentejo; if I have not, it must have been because my attention was drawn off suddenly to other subjects, for I have met with few since you and I parted whose character and fortunes have made so lasting an impression upon me from so short an acquaintance as his. He belonged to that set of men whom I confess to you I am used to regard very partially—I mean the old French nobility. When the fortunes of the King became irretrievable he followed his father to England, and fought, I believe, in Flanders, under the Prince de Condé. He appears to have been very well received in England, and I am sure recollected it better than anybody. I do not know when he came to Spain, but I can easily understand that a person of his rank and ardent spirit, who had, unhappily, no other interest than his own to serve, would choose any service to enter into in preference to that of England. He married in this country, and rose rapidly to the rank he held at his death. Since the breaking out of the Spanish war he has almost always been entrusted with a separate command, has proved himself an admirable partisan, and distinguished himself on many occasions. He was employed in this manner when I found him at Alcantara. Regnier had just crossed the Tagus, and as his movements were for some time very uncertain, Don Carlos was left with a very small force to watch the passes of the river, and his vigilance was unceasing. I had fortunately, some days before I came to Alcantara, fallen in with an officer employed from a different quarter upon the same service with myself, and we visited him together. He received us with something more than the good breeding of a Frenchman, and seemed to be paying off debts of honour of long standing in every good office he did us; and had it been our business to continue with him as long as he required, I am not sure whether he would not, in spite of his slender means, have soon cancelled

the account that he alone kept between himself and England, in acts of kindness and courtesy. Perhaps, too, the set of people he was living with might have had a share without knowing it in gaining us this favourable reception. His officers were like almost all the Spanish officers I have ever seen—a very motley group, drawn from I know not what class. Among them was a guerilla chief named Pantigoso, a sad, sanguinary fellow, who talked of blood and wounds with all the impatience, but without the passion, of a Hotspur. He and his band of myrmidons were, however, very useful to the partisan, and it was his interest to be faithful. Pantigoso and another ferocious colonel were the persons he chiefly held communion with: they were adventurers, and certainly had character about them, such as it was. In the midst of his banditti, he often used to look words that seemed to imply, "What a pretty set of fellows I am obliged to keep company with;" and he reminded me more than once of Charles, in the gloomy play of "The Robbers." I dare say you have never read it, and I do not recommend it, for, of all German things, it is the most German. He more frequently reminded me of Lord Falkland. Naturally, he appeared to have all the gaiety with which the French charm us in society, but it seldom broke through an air of seriousness which appeared habitual to him, and which he constantly preserved when talking of the critical situation of Portugal and all that depended upon her fortunes, for at that moment the thunder-cloud was just bursting over the frontier; Almeida was just laid siege to. He seemed over happy to have met with those in whom he thought he could create an interest when talking upon these subjects; and spoke to us with freedom, as Englishmen, both because he was partial to the character of our nation, and because, from our relations with the Peninsula, and with Portugal in particular, it was natural we should take a lively interest in the same cause. Frequently, in a forced strain of humour, he used to tell us that if it should fall to his lot to be again expatriated he would always go with great satisfaction to England; but that he was afraid he had left his native country with a much better grace

at twenty than he should his adopted one now. Yet when he talked of France, it seemed to be with a feeling for something beyond himself, or that which depended upon him. I believe his nature was quite fine enough to bear such an impression, and whenever it showed itself it made those who were about him almost bow with veneration. He was well known to the present King of France, and had received from him marked tokens of favour and assurances of esteem. He received the Cross and Order of St. Louis immediately from himself, or, rather, he confirmed it to him. It was not only by those, however, to whom his loyalty was due that he was so respected and esteemed: the French generals, and those by whom he has often been proscribed as traitor, have made many clumsy attempts at complimenting him. These dirty fellows take upon them airs of chivalry at times that become them ill enough, but it is pleasant to draw respect from an enemy, of whatever colour he may be. I do not know whether his father is still living, but his family is in Minorca.

'He has died in the vigour of life. I have dwelt a long time upon this theme, but it will not be wondered at that the concern I naturally feel at the premature death of a distinguished person, with whom I was fortunate enough to become acquainted, though ever so slightly, should have led me to indulge in a longer detail than a dispassionate one might have given way to; nor do I think it will weary you to have mentioned all that I had an opportunity of knowing of one who seemed to me to have been so truly estimable.

'Something now about ourselves. Our prospects in this part of the country are not so deplorable as they were when I last wrote to you. We have good reason to think that after the fall of Badajos Lord Wellington intends returning to us, and undertaking something against Rodrigo. I believe it will not give us much trouble; it is ill garrisoned and ill provided, and its communication with Salamanca, if not entirely cut off, certainly rendered very hazardous by the famous guerilla captain, Don Julian Sanchez, whom I am afraid I have not done justice to in my letters lately. He has a numerous body

of cavalry under him, and has made himself very useful to us, even in the action of the 5th, although this is not exactly the field in which his exertions may be employed to most advantage. I could never divest myself of the idea of the Forty Thieves when I looked at him and his gang; but he has, notwithstanding, a great deal of merit, and is confessedly the first of his order.

'The last packet was full of grateful intelligence to us. I am rejoiced to find that nobles, plebeians, and all, join in a general shout of acclamation to Lord Wellington. Nothing, certainly, can be handsomer than the behaviour of the Parliament; but he deserves it all. Next to this, the subscriptions that we find are about to be raised, in addition to the £100,000 for the people of these ruined provinces, are subjects of much satisfaction among us. You are acting the part of a great nation throughout.

'You know I am anxious to make as much as I can of anything I hear favourable to the Spaniards, and I shall be glad to find others in the same humour with regard to their behaviour at Albuera: their Cortes, too, is every day becoming less unbending towards us, and more dignified. There are people here, however, who ask—but what have they done? These are the folks, and there are plenty of them, who study history from the "Arabian Nights' Entertainments," and expect that here, as well as elsewhere, the magic ring should work out its effects, never suspecting that the conjuror has no power so far north.'

'Sabugal: June 11, 1811.

'Everything is drawing southward; the French made a flourish the other day in our front, and seemingly with an intention to advance in force upon us. We withdrew, in consequence, behind the Coa, and destroyed what remained of the works of Almeida.

'13th.—I had written so far, when I was called off to translate some interesting papers sent us in a sly way from Salamanca and towns on the road from thence towards

Plasençia. Their whole force has moved in that direction, leaving small garrisons in Rodrigo, Salamanca, and other principal points. Our army of the north has, in conformity with the movements of the enemy, extended itself from hence towards Peñamacor, Castel Branco, and the Tagus; and the greater part of it, I should think, would be in march at this moment upon Villa Velha, directing its course towards Badajos. Something great is to be done in this quarter immediately. The place defends itself well hitherto, better, I believe, than we had expected; and a powerful army, with Soult at its head, seems bent upon relieving it. I have that opinion of Lord Wellington that I think he would decide, in proper time, upon raising the siege, if the occasion demanded it, but I do not find that this is likely to take place; and I am even fearful that it may be thought there is something to spare, and that we run a risk, situated as we are, of being left in observation on this side the Tagus. We are directed to move to-morrow to Capinha; it is a league nearer to Castel Branco than Belmonte, on the Guarda road. Upon my word, I like anything better than fighting for fighting's sake; but while we are in the world we like to live in it, and fighting seems to be the order of the day here.

'You may believe that I was not a little happy to find that the battle of Albuera, desperate as it was, spared, however, one whom I tried to describe to you as I thought he deserved, and who, we were given to understand, had fallen in it. I mean Don Carlos de Espagna.

'I consulted your peace of mind very little when I neglected telling you in the course of that letter, as I might have done, that the parcel of desperate fortunes had at length arrived safe at Lisbon. It is now on the road to me, in charge of one of my own regiment; and after all its "hairbreadth 'scapes" I will ensure it a hearty welcome, for it finds me, like my neighbours, barefoot and ragged-shouldered. Tell Henry we have been leading not at all the sort of life he has been longing for lately in this part of the world. For some days past I have had nightingales under my window, La Bruyère and

Montesquieu upon my shelf; played cricket till our legs were tired, and chess till our heads were; and, in fact, we have almost forgot the sound of drums.'

'Arronches: June 21, 1811.

'You see they can do nothing without the 5th Division. Immediately after I despatched my desponding letter to you from Sabugal we marched upon Castel Branco and Villa Velha, and left Portalègre this morning. The 5th and 6th Divisions are encamped just outside the town. The siege of Badajos is raised some days since. Soult is in the neighbourhood in force, but we are equal to anything he can attempt. The whole army is collected, healthy, well-provisioned, and impudent; so that you will find, I hope, that we are both morally and physically qualified to cope with Marshal Soult. They made a strong reconnaissance the day before yesterday upon Elvas and Campo Mayor. The report is to-day that they had pushed across the Guadiana, and seem to be retiring altogether. We have just arrived, and take everything upon trust. Godwin, whom you inquire after so tenderly, is, I hope, by this time nearly recovered. My wandering baggage will never catch me if we continue to run away from it so fast as we have been doing for some days past; it is, however, fairly on the road.

'I am very happy to learn from Henry that Sir Howard is going out as secretary to General Brownrigg. I understand it is a post of considerable emolument, and cannot be given into more worthy hands. The Duke's return to office did not give me less satisfaction, I assure you: the whole army rejoices at it, the lovers of public justice as well as those who are anxious for the welfare of the army.'

'Arronches: June 30, 1811.

'Since I wrote to you the other day from this place nothing of any importance has taken place. The army continues assembled, and ready to move into its position the moment it appears necessary; but it is evident the enemy does not mean to call up such an exertion from us at present. We hear many

reports of his retiring in many directions, but, upon my word, I know nothing of his movements.

'What a kick up the Duke's return to office has created among us! Cressets and epaulettes, and almost stars have been falling upon left breasts and shoulders of unknown persons; and quiet "walking men" have had spurs clinging to their heels, with a label tacked to each, crying, "Know all ye that are concerned, this is a major." I cannot read a Gazette that does not place an acquaintance or two out of my reach.

'If you continue to behave well at home, and send us the reinforcements we deserve, and make the Emperor of all the Russias fight into the bargain, we shall be very ready to open the gates of Madrid in the course of the summer to any traveller whose curiosity prompts him to journey this way.

'*July* 1.—We have this moment received orders to go and take up quiet quarters at Portalègre. We march at daybreak to-morrow morning.

'I am happy to find my letters to the general (Benson) arrived in time to be in any way interesting. In answer to the first of his questions, I beg you will tell him that the spherical shot he inquires about is in high favour with the army, and its utility fully established upon many late occasions; but certainly at Fuentes (where, I dare say, it struck him this weapon might have been employed with singular effect), owing, perhaps, to a defect in the composition, or some damage contracted by lying by, it did not produce the effects that were expected from it, and which we had a right to calculate upon with reference to its former exploits. With reference to his second question, it is certain our dragoons have lately become much more formidable than they were used to be, from the practice of the exercise he mentions; and this, added to the superiority of their horses, gives them invariably an advantage over the French whenever numbers are nearly equal; but the French have always had a great superiority of cavalry in this country. I am glad to find you are sending us out more, with Lord Paget at their head—we understand he is an excellent cavalry officer.

'My last letter will have told you that we were preparing to march the day after I closed it to this place. Here we continue to remain, much to our own satisfaction, and I believe I may add, the object of envy of the whole army besides. We are even seated high enough to stand in the way of head-quarters. They have threatened to put us to the rout this many a day past, and I know not how it happens that we have escaped so long without the threatened invasion. When they do come I am afraid they will shake a great number of us from our seats; but we do not despair of being suffered to keep hiding-places in the town, even should this awful visitation come upon us. Portalègre is worth keeping upon almost any terms.

'This is very nearly the season when I was here last year —a week or two later I think I arrived. Nothing can be more beautiful than its neighbourhood, or more healthy than its situation; and this last consideration is even heightened in value from its being almost the only spot in the Alentejo which continues healthy through all seasons. Where the greater part of the army are now will shortly be very unhealthy. The Guadiana is a pernicious neighbourhood at this time of the year, but I think they will shortly have no cause to remain upon it. It seems evident that Soult has given up every purpose he might have had in view beyond relief of Badajos, and his army has separated into several corps—more with the intention, it would appear, of resting his troops during the very hot season, than of employing them actively. Indeed, it seems to be the intention on both sides to lie by, if possible, during the ensuing six weeks or two months. *Comme il leur plaira.* So that one side does not come and lie upon the top of us here, I am quite resigned to all the ill they intend me, in the meantime, by leaving us in possession. The hours pass very pleasantly away with me. Some of them are winged, heels and shoulders. There is a French family in the town, in high credit, and graced with two delightful girls, with whom I go and "causer" every day for an hour or two. Since I know them I talk French with the fluency of a dictionary, and

not unfrequently with as little coherence between the parts of my discourse.

'Our sunshine has been clouded for some days past by the self-murder of an amiable man, in command of one of the regiments of our division, thinking (at variance, I believe, with all the world besides) that a slight had been thrown upon his character in one of the late despatches relating to Almeida. He was young, ardent, full of military qualifications, universally esteemed, and married to a young wife, with a family to which he was tenderly attached. What has he not left us to regret in this dreadful act, unjustifiable in any age of the world, in any condition or season of life, under any calamity short of madness, and then only pardonable—how much more unjustifiable, then, in the times and in the belief we live in.'

'Quinta of Alameira: July 25, 1811.

'All that I prepared you for in my last letter is more than complete. We have been kicked out of Portalègre, and are living "under the canopy of birds and beasts" a week since; wild ones, too, for the woods we inhabit are the ancient inheritance of wolves and wild boars and serpents. Such, however, is their awe of man, or possibly such the scarcity of their numbers, that we have encountered none of either tribe since we usurped their territory, and wherever they are to be found they will probably wait till we come for them. In spite, however, of this piece of good luck, we find it difficult to lessen our misfortune in the eyes of the world, and we are doing all we can to lessen the disgrace. Like the heroes of old, we would magnify the prowess of our vanquishers, and comfort ourselves that, at least, we fall by no ignoble hand. Headquarters, with the 1st Division at their heels, are not found to be stout enough; but they must call in Castaños the Great, and all that is worthy to be called Spanish, to complete the overthrow. It is quite a pleasure to be turned out of doors upon such terms. I dare say you perceive I am speaking for my friends. For myself I continue to live under a roof, and am therefore not called upon, in my own person, for such

superb feelings. Our camp is about half distance between Portalègre and Alegrete—a long league from either place—and immediately under the Sierra of Saint Mamed: the situation is healthy, and as a picture it is beautiful. About a mile nearer to Portalègre we have established our head-quarters, at an excellent Quinta, which I have named at the beginning of my letter. There are gardens, fruits, abundance of wood, and variety of it; water just as you please—in fountains, lake, stream, cascade, or mill-race; mountain, craggy and uncovered; valley of vine; olive (I was going to say milk and honey), in a favoured district of S. Mamed; close at hand, a forest of chestnut trees, a many-twinkling wood, through which you can ride for miles by excellent roads, unbonneted, under a meridian sun, and mistake it for the moonlight. And to be sheltered from such a sun as we have nowadays awakens a sort of sensation that we feel far from disagreeable, when we have something dreadful near us which we are conscious is prevented from doing us harm.

'There are nothing but cottages to interrupt you in these rides, and cottages sometimes in such places as make you stop and stare, and wonder how they got there. What is there in all this to make us envy head-quarters, Castaños, and the 1st Division? I went yesterday to pay the visit that everybody pays, and returned to my woods, exclaiming, with Erminia's shepherd, "*O corte, addio!*"

'A young hermit is a stupid fellow, too. I hope you do not expect that I shall become one. But I like a morning's ride by myself, and I shall often climb into the woods I have been describing to you if our gipsy life continues.

'There is every chance of our remaining as we are for a month or six weeks. Two divisions have crossed the Tagus. The rest are cantoned in the healthy parts of the Alentejo.'

CHAPTER XI.

1811–1812.

THE PASS OF PERALES—GRAND SCENERY—STORMS—GUARDA—PROMOTION TO MAJORITY—ASSISTANT QUARTERMASTER-GENERAL—STORMING OF CIUDAD RODRIGO—CAPTURE—ADVANCE UPON BADAJOS.

'Payo, near the Pass of Perales, Sierra de Gata: August 16, 1811.

'How many times have I had the pen in my hand since we began our march from Portalègre, devoted, as I intended it should be, to your service, and have been obliged to employ it upon other subjects. War, you see, is very much in our day as it used to be with Alexander, if the song be faithful, "Never ending, still beginning; fighting still, and still destroying." No man surely was ever more blind to his destiny than I was when I last wrote to you from the woods of Alameira. The army marched almost immediately after. I wrote to Henry from Castel de Vide, and told him my next letter to you should be from Castel Branco; but soldiers' vows, in these situations, are commonly as false as dicers' oaths, and I hope Jove treats them as he does lovers' perjuries, at which, they say, "he laughs."

'You will observe I have taken some pains at the top of my letter to furnish you with the means of discovering where we are. We have been several days in this neighbourhood. The care of the Alentejo is left to its old defenders, General Hill and the 2nd Division. With the exception of this and some Portuguese and cavalry, the whole army is assembled in this point—part investing Rodrigo, and the remainder covering the operation.

'The French are at Plasençia. Between this and Rodrigo runs the strong chain of mountains separating Estremadura

from Castile, called in this part Sierra de Gata, and higher up Sierra and Peña de Françia. We are posted immediately behind this Sierra, and all the passes through it leading from Plasençia and Coria to Rodrigo are committed to our charge.

'I have been very busy in exploring since we came here, and my work is not half over yet. I should have continued it to-day had I not hurt my foot yesterday on horseback, and am inclined to indulge it in a day's rest. Each of these passes is a Thermopylæ. The French reconnoitred the heads of them yesterday with a strong party of infantry and cavalry; did some mischief in the villages below the mountain, and caught some of us napping. (They cannot force us here while we are awake.) Rodrigo is weakly garrisoned, and I should think would fall to us soon.

'Think of my meeting the other day, quite by accident, with Don Carlos. He was passing through the town we had just marched into on his way to take the command in Old Castile. He is quite recovered from his wound, and I was not a little proud to find that he recollected immediately not only myself but my name, the moment I presented myself before him. A year's separation after so short an acquaintance generally obliterates at least one from the memory. He has given me a thousand commissions to perform for him in England, all of which I engaged to do, and none of which I shall perhaps be able to accomplish. However, I have already shown every disposition to end well, for I have begun by losing the memorandum he left with me, and must write to him immediately for another.

'. . . You will be glad to hear that my friend Godwin is recovering the use of his hand by degrees. I receive left-handed letters from him as often as he can write them, for his right hand as yet is unequal to its office; and to tell you the truth, as I have already told himself, if his penmanship were the only consideration, I should not care how long it continued so, for he writes better to me with his left hand than ever he did with his right, for although he has it better under control than anyone I have ever seen write left-handed who expected

to recover the use of the right, he has not sufficient command over it yet to take liberties. . . .'

'Payo: September 1, 1811.

'I have just accomplished the impossible. I have written a letter to General Brownrigg, begging him to get me a majority in one way or the other before he leaves England, corrected and revised till it is as clear of passion and as full of hard words as ever letter of the kind was written by the most indifferent of suitors to the most indifferent of patrons; and I have the vanity to think it equal to any of those models that are published by our *literati* for the assistance of the unlearned, whenever it should be their chance to fall into difficult situations. I wish it all the success it deserves.

'I sat down the other day to tell you that we were still upon our mountain throne, without a chance of being dislodged either by friend or foe. Since this we have certain accounts of Marmont's marching upon Salamanca from Plasençia; and I believe about this time his army is collected there. He can intend nothing against us, nor interrupt our proceedings against Rodrigo without considerable reinforcement. We hear it is coming, with the Emperor at its head. You know more of this than I do, for I promise you this last report we get from England.

'Since I wrote to you last I have been Lavaterising the face of this country, and find plenty of character in it. It was evidently made for the giants, and since they were disinherited it has not been much frequented. We little people feel as if we had no business here. Not one of the six or seven passes that I have explored (conscious all the time of my unworthiness) but has a character peculiar to itself. Sometimes you ascend to the head of the mountain, which always rises gradually on our side, and look over on what seems an unfinished part of the world—so vast and shapeless everything appears. If you descend, though by very safe roads, you wind round precipices that it is not prudent to look in the face before breakfast or after dinner (unless it be as ladies dine); and further on you cross chasms which the giants might have

bestridden with perfect ease to themselves, but over which bridges have been flung since they vacated their seats, and these points are not uninteresting to those who have to defend them against attacks from persons of as small dimensions as themselves. Looking up after having got so far, you see a hundred rocks hanging over you that I suppose have been stationary from the beginning of time—certainly since the days of the giants; but they look so very black and menacing that I believe no one has ever passed under them without feeling convinced that they only waited for his arrival to put themselves in motion. Our alarms make us very vain at times, but I believe this is one of the few instances in which we do not feel mortified at finding that we overrated our importance. There are wolves here too, but I never encountered one; and if the veracity of grave men were to be questioned, I should be tempted to suspect that a wolf was as inseparable from the story of a mountain as a fairy used to be from that of a dell or river-bank. On other sides the scene is quite different. You have cultivated landscape beneath as extensive as your eyes can carry you, and the moment you begin to descend you lose sight of it in a forest of large branching chestnut trees reaching to the foot of the mountain, where there are situated a number of populous and pleasant villages, rich at this moment in wines and all sorts of fruit. Here, too, there are bridges to cross, but of a more genteel description; and the rocks are so dressed out with laurel, arbutus, and myrtle, and all sorts of green things, that there is nothing terrific in them, but rather it would seem a pleasure to be tumbled upon by such well-graced monsters. Sometimes there is a "silent valley," such as Milton's fallen angels retired into, and sang. It would be quite big enough to hold them all, even though Satan, as he is described, should be taken as the standard of measurement for each. You see how naturally a quartermaster-general sets about portioning off ground before he is aware of it. Yet I believe I have looked at these scenes oftener as an amateur than as a soldier in the course of my rambles. The highest point of the mountain they call Xalama,

and from hence you may see the hawk soaring, and he is still beneath you. Sometimes the shepherds—to rouse the game or perhaps to frighten the wolves from the neighbourhood of their flocks—set fire to the heath below, and if the wind is at all in the secret, in a moment the whole side of the mountain is alive, and such a smoke and flame and roaring keep pace with the conflagration as you would think it could only be the business of a volcano to produce. I owe it to my good fortune more than to anything else about me that one of these itinerant bonfires had not played me a shabby trick the other day, for in going down one of the passes upon a sort of adventure the traitor crossed my way before I had completed the object of my expedition; and I and my party were obliged, with some difficulty and more labour, to gain another pass to return home by, without risk, however, as the enemy we wanted to learn something about was further off than we suspected. I beg you will not disclose this adventure to my military friends. I do not know whether I shall ever be able to afford it, but certainly not at present. For want of something more immediately interesting to regale you with, I believe I have exhausted the subject of landscape drawing. But for none of its natural qualifications, in my opinion, does this place deserve to be half so much celebrated as for its being the spot whereon the wandering parcel and myself at last came together.

'No Bonaparte coming, no Russian War, and Marmont not proceeding beyond Bañas; this is all I have to add, not as news for you, but as information we have just received from England, excepting the latter circumstance.

'I shall be glad to hear from you again; in the meantime rest assured everything is safe and exactly as I wished it, and do not think anything is impossible henceforward in the adventures of a parcel.

'We rejoice to hear the King is something better.'

'Payo: September 19, 1811.

'I received your letter, but not by the hand of Sir Howard, as you suppose. I dare say you have since heard he is gone

to Corunna, so that he took the earliest opportunity of sending me your letter . . . .

'I believe I told you, when I wrote last, that we were placing ourselves in a situation for besieging Rodrigo. Our battering train has been moving up the Douro for some time past, and is now, I believe, very near its ultimate destination. It seems to be the opinion, however, that the French are, or will shortly be, in force sufficient to prevent our undertaking this operation in their face; but there is no prospect of their attempting a fresh invasion of our Portuguese territory. Whatever they mean to do will certainly be done shortly, and I hope I shall not have to date my letters to you from this place many weeks longer: it would make a rigorous winter quarter. Nature seems to do nothing in moderation here. You ask me how we thunder in these countries. I assure you the thunders of Xalama (which is the name they give to the highest point of the mountain, and we lie immediately under it), are not common thunders, but they remind one of those that were launched at the Titans of old; and we are sometimes tempted to believe they are again in possession, and again disobedient.

'A few nights ago, while in bed, we may be said to have been clothed in thunder and lightning, for it seemed to have got in among us, for some hours. The lightning was one unequal blaze, but as uninterrupted as the motion of a troubled sea, and the thunder seemed to depart from our side. Every cloud that burst over the mountain descended instantly upon us, but our humble cabins had no temptation to electricity. The rain and hail only condescended to visit us plentifully. There certainly never was such disturbance abroad. One could have thought nature had suspended her laws, while she was in reality enforcing them gloriously, for we have breathed freely since, which we had not done for many days before; and the vines, olives, and chestnuts are very much obliged to her, however rough she may have been in the dispensation of her favours. I suppose you have a comet in view every night, as well as ourselves. But it has been eclipsed among us for a

moment by the appearance of the Heroine of Saragoza. She passed, by accident, through our quarters, and stopped a short time among us to receive the homage we were all very ready to pay her. I wish she was prettier, for I cannot help confessing my frailty in admitting the supposition that beauty could add anything to the charms of a damsel so bewitchingly heroic. I begin to fear (and I date from the appearance of this constellation of exploits) that mine is not a well-organised mind.

'The Prince of Orange came here the other day, and I showed him the lions. He appears a fine young man. It is something curious to contemplate that a Prince of Orange should be actively employed in the cause of Spain. Who says the world does not go round?

'Still we hope for better accounts of the King: the strength of his constitution is wonderful.

'*Wednesday.* — A report has just reached us that the French are in march from Plasençia towards Talavera and Madrid.'

'Guarda: October 1, 1811.

'When I wrote to you last, I believe I told you that the French were showing a disposition to relieve Rodrigo from its uneasy neighbourhood. They have since justified our expectations. On the 25th they crossed the Agueda, a short distance above Rodrigo, and forced the advanced corps of our army in this direction to retire upon Guinaldo. Several very handsome things were done on our side, against a very superior force. On the 26th we were more concentrated, and better prepared to dispute the ground with them. They, however, declined attacking us this day, but their movements rendered it necessary to concentrate still more; and during the night and following morning we fell back upon the heights behind Aldea Velha, Aldea Ponte, and Alfaiates; our division on the right behind Aldea Velha. In the course of this day they made partial attacks upon our centre, and gave fresh opportunities to the Portuguese, as well as to our own troops, to show the humour they were in. The next morning we retired

further, upon Quadraseis; but the French withdrew also, and we have seen nothing of them since. Our light troops, I believe, are again at Nave d'Aver, Alameda, and Gallegos, their old cantonments. We never expected they would attempt to force us from the Coa, but we thought they would have attended us so far. The whole army is going into cantonments; ours are here, and there is every probability of our continuing cloud-capped for some months, unless the French make advances upon Galicia, and then I dare say we shall make diversions from it. This is a good town, in spite of the shaking it has had, and the frost and snow it threatens us with.

'Did not you make Henry a present a long time ago of a book composed or compiled by a Doctor Gregory upon natural philosophy? If I am right, he has it by him. I think I may safely get you to ask him to send it out to me whenever one of your opportunities presents itself, as I presume he has enough upon his hands at present without the Doctor, who, from the little I have seen of him, appears to be a host in himself. I propose to become very strong in this branch of wisdom before the close of winter, if you will undertake to help me out so far. At present I am as ignorant as anybody about me.

'I wrote to Henry the day we broke up from the frontier —a letter full of prophecies, and an order upon the Treasury for £150, which I wish him to give into Biddulph's hands. Fighting, you see, makes one rich.

'Still the same accounts from Windsor: are they never to mend?'

'Guarda: October 21, 1811.

'General Walker came among us a few days ago from Corunna, and by good luck we have had him appointed to command a brigade in the 5th Division, so that he is now in Guarda. He is very well, and glad to be relieved from his troublesome post at Corunna. Of course you know by this time that Sir Howard Douglas is filling his place there.

'Our weather (with the exception of four-and-twenty hours of tempest, which very likely affected you as well as us) has been weather of Paradise ever since we came here. To-day there is a break up, and Garnerin's balloon was never more fairly seated in the clouds than we are at this moment.

'*Adieu beaux jours!* if the world does not belie thee, O Guarda, for it says that when you once begin to rain and fog, there is no end of it.

'I am in the middle of Eugene, and I laid him down to write to you. He delights, although in English, and sometimes I am sure ill-translated. You know his life was one of my school books—thanks to Goully—and half the events he relates are still fresh in my recollection; but his biographer could never give them the interest that he does himself. His simplicity is admirable; if there is any affectation about him, it is an air of levity he constantly puts on in giving a tale of butchery, which, by-the-bye, he has frequent occasion to do; but his meeting with his mother at Brussels is finely told, and his friendship with Commerci and the Prince of Saxe-Gotha. On all these occasions he says quite enough, and I should think would pacify any crusty people who might have taken huff at his talking of the wry faces the Jews made when they were employed in tossing the 12,000 dead Turks into the Danube, and so forth. He has made me laugh heartily sometimes. Vendôme's revenge for his attempt to kidnap him, I think, is excellent—his Battle of Oudenarde is beautiful. I do not know whether he is more admirable in his acknowledgments to his friends or his foes, or whether it would cost more to an ordinary mind in his situation to tell the truth of Vendôme or of Marlborough. Vendôme, as far as I have gone, is certainly the hero of the book, and I will defy his biographer, if he has one, to make anything half so interesting of him as Eugene does, and really frequently at his own expense, for to do it on other terms may be policy, but this must be liberality.

'I have been talking to you as if you had a thorough acquaintance with all I have been talking about, but if you have it not already, you inevitably must set about it, for it is

at all points a lady's book, as full of the marvellous as Cœlebs or anything that I know of in the republic of lady's literature. Pray send it me in French if ever you have an opportunity. I shall always be in the humour to read it over and over again.'

'Guarda: November 19, 1811.

'I have had an answer from General Brownrigg. He says he thinks I deserve promotion almost as much as some of my neighbours, and that he will say so to the Duke of York before he goes. I suppose now *he is* gone; he must have had rough weather.

'We are all quiet here. General Hill, you will find, has been punishing Girard for his negligence in Estremadura. I travelled the road he took, through Aldea del Cano, etc., when I went from Merida to Caçeres. I am happy it has happened to General Hill; he is a favourite of mine.

'I believe it is to Goully that I am indebted for an introduction to a most valuable character lately—General Graham. He lives at a village called Lagioso, two leagues from Guarda, and has shown me great attention. I respect him more than I can describe to you. I find from the newspapers last received that Goully is still at Windsor. No amendment I am sorry to find in this quarter.'

'Guarda: December 1, 1811.

'I am afraid I shall appear dilatory in answering all the congratulations your last letter brought me upon my accession to the bench.[1]

'Immediately after I received your letter, the army made a forward movement, I believe for the purpose of threatening a rich convoy that is on its way from Salamanca to Rodrigo. This will have the effect of making Marmont collect a large portion of his army, if he means to carry it through, and will therefore harass him. Our move was upon Alfaiates and Payo. Here we remained four days, rather fortunately for me,

[1] On October 10 he had been promoted to be a Major.

for I had picked up a sore throat and some fever, and I therefore passed them in bed, having nothing better to do, and thereby got completely rid of my ailings.

'We halt in Guarda only this day. To-morrow we cross the Estrella to Linhares and Villa Cortes. The day after, we march to Pinheiros and the neighbourhood, and on Wednesday we enter our cantonments round Galizes. We promise ourselves good winter quarters, much warmer and nearer our supplies than where we now are. The weather has been very fine, but very cold, for some time, and it still continues. There is no snow yet upon any of the mountains.

'A word or two now touching the majority. Your conjectures as to how we get it are, I think, rather too favourable to me and my friend. . . . To the sincerity of the Duke of York, and to Goully's recollection of me, I feel every obligation. I dare say Goully will one day or other have an opportunity of expressing to the Duke of York how sensible I am of his goodness, and I beg of her to do me this kindness whenever she can. I am endeavouring to get a lift on the staff since my promotion, and I do not think I shall find much difficulty in it. I shall certainly not think of leaving the country.

'Dallas has just joined the regiment, quite re-established by the Caldas baths, and looking better than ever I saw him.

'My friend Godwin, whose letter brought me the first tidings of my new creation, is in London, taking the first advice about his wounded hand. He has recovered wonderfully, but I am afraid a miracle would be wanting to restore it to him as I would wish.

'General Walker has this moment been with me, and desires me to remember him very kindly to you. I do not know whether I have ever acknowledged the receipt of the boots you sent me by him. I am very much obliged to you for thinking of me, and I wish those who made them had recollected me as well, for they made allowances for the chance of my having grown since we parted, which was hardly fair. However, it did no harm, for I happened not to be in distress myself, and they sit remarkably well upon as honest a fellow

as myself—my old *chargé d'affaires* Thomas. Talking of *chargé d'affaires*, I am sorry to find we are to lose Mr. Stuart in this country. I hope he is going to be of more use to us elsewhere. I am afraid not though.'

'Travinhas: December 7, 1811.

'I told you in my last letter that I had written to the Quartermaster-General, expressing a hope that my promotion would not be the means of removing me from under his orders, and I have this morning received a very gracious answer from him. He begins his letter: "I should be very sorry if your late promotion were to lead to your removal from the Quartermaster-General's Department, and so far as Lord Wellington is concerned, I have no apprehension of the kind. I beg you will let me know the exact date of your appointment to the rank of major, that you may be put in orders as Assistant Quartermaster-General, and inserted in the pay lists as such, from that period." General Murray has shown me great kindness on many occasions, and he has not disappointed me on this.

'You may therefore drop the Deputy in addressing me as soon as you please, and give me an early proof you are aware of my consequence. I assure you I look upon this as no trifling point gained; for, setting aside the advantages I derive from it in point of emolument, I am now filling the situation that I prefer to all others, so long as I hold the rank I have, with an army under such circumstances, and under Lord Wellington's orders, instead of setting off to take a nap with my drowsy 2nd Battalion in Gibraltar. My duties will differ very little from those I have been all along employed in, and I think it probable I shall continue with the 5th Division. I like it, as my regiment belongs to it, and I have great hopes of General Leith's again taking the command of it. He has been in Lisbon some days since.

'I am very well pleased with matters as far as they have gone lately, but I must lose no time in looking out for the lieutenant-colonelcy, and bidding as high for it as my means will allow me whenever it falls in my way. This step obtained,

everything goes on afterwards by seniority; and, therefore, the sooner I get it the better.

'A word or two now about our quarters. The village I date my letter from, and in which I am living, lies about a league to the right of the great road leading from Celorico to Coimbra. The 9th Regiment and the head-quarters are here, and the remainder are distributed among eight or nine of the neighbouring villages. General Walker is at a place called Midoera, about three miles from here, and, to our great mortification, a better village. I saw him an hour ago, and dine with him to-morrow.

'I hope they will suffer us to remain in these villages as long as we are to be idle, and I think it likely they will. We shall have, at least, sound shelter from the weather, which, in many parts of the country, is a rare qualification for a house. At present the weather is delightfully fine, but cold. The country is beautiful.

'The French swept with a light foot over this part of the country; and many of these villages (particularly this and Midoera) retain no traces, or hardly any, of their ravages.

'I am sorry to find that at the time you wrote last Aunt had not been quite well, and like myself lately had been rather fond of her bed. I trust, however, that it proved as good a friend in need to her as it did to me, for I have been *on ne peut pas mieux* ever since. Thank all my friends as often as you think it necessary for all their congratulations. I rejoice to hear Goully continues so well. The Princesses are very gracious, and I wish I could let them know my sense of their kindness in thinking of me.'

'Albergueria: January 18, 1812.

'The dating of my letter will, I daresay, not surprise you, as you will certainly have heard before this reaches you of the movement of the army upon Rodrigo. We have made five marches from Travinhas, passing the Estrella by Guarda, and arrived here yesterday. We are not sorry, therefore, to have a day's rest for our horses and ourselves. It is probable we shall have more. Very rapid advances have been made in the

siege, and we are full of hopes. The breach was half practicable yesterday. However, you must understand that the preparing the other half is a work of labour.

'We are here within twenty miles of the town, and hear the cannon distinctly. It has been incessant during the night, and continued at intervals throughout this day. The weather has been the finest possible for us, but it has sometimes frozen too hard for our poor friends in the trenches. The nights are bitter cold, but there is every prospect of a continuance of dry weather. This day and yesterday have been like May in England. The 5th, 6th, and 7th Divisions have nothing to say to all this; they are taking too good care of us. We expect General Leith to join us this evening or to-morrow; and we hope, through his merits, to be brought forward, should Marshal Marmont get over the Gata with the intention of disturbing us. He set off in a hurry for Valencia some time since with all his people; and D'Orsenne, I believe, for Vittoria. I believe they will find a difficulty in diverting us from our purpose, as matters stand. Marmont, we understand, is in march to repass the Gata.

'Orders have this moment reached us to march forward to-morrow to Guinaldo and Casillas dos Flores.

'Henry's winter campaign beats ours in hardships. In the whole catalogue of our calamities we have nothing so severe as silk stockings o' frosty nights! I hope when I write again to be able to account to you for something worth the telling. At all events, it shall be soon.'

'Ciudad Rodrigo: January 20, 1812.

'The place was stormed at seven o'clock last night, in two breaches, by the 3rd and Light Divisions, and carried in half an hour. We marched in this morning to mend holes and repair damages.

'You will learn the particulars from the despatch much better than I can detail them to you; and they will come to you fully as interesting in this manner, since all I learn myself is only hearsay.

'The siege has certainly been carried on with great vigour and address, and our loss not greater than should have been expected. I fear we are losing a valuable officer in General Crawford; no one entertains hopes of his recovery.

'Marmont, they say, is at Salamanca with scarcely 30,000 men, which will hardly serve him at present. We do not expect any trouble from him.

'Valencia has fallen, and Blake and his army prisoners. One of the Napiers is again wounded, and lost his arm; surely there are lucky and unlucky men in this world.

'We are promised that our labours in this way shall not continue long. If we display as much industry in repairing, as others have shown vigour in destroying, we shall do well.

'The town this morning presents all those painful scenes which a place taken by assault cannot be free from. There has been, however, less bloodshed than is usual in such extremities.

'I hope the Division next on the list will soon take the spade and shovel out of our hands, although I fear there is little chance of more interesting employment at present. Blake's failure has vexed me much. The letter which I wrote you a day or two ago, and which, I think, will hardly reach you before this, would have so completely satisfied you of my security in the midst of these perils and storms, that if I had not recollected the promise I made you in it of writing soon, I should hardly have thought it worth while sitting down to write a long story on a subject that I had so little to do with.'

It is difficult in reading these quiet letters of Major Gomm to realise the situation and surroundings in which some of them were written. This last letter, with its date, Ciudad Rodrigo, January 20, 1812, must have been written under peculiar circumstances. That very morning the British had poured into the town, intoxicated first with joy at their success in the bloody encounter of the past night, and then with the wine which they looted from all the wine vaults in the town. Churches, shops, and houses were first ransacked, and then

wantonly destroyed. A great fire was even lit in the magazine, and the officers were in many instances fired upon by their inebriated soldiers. The French writers blamed Wellington severely for permitting such barbarity. The excesses were, however, unlicensed, and were checked as soon as possible; while for the brilliant exploit of this capture Wellington received his earldom and an additional pension. In such a scene of wild riot and excitement few heads could have been calmer than that of the writer of these letters, in which the last received home letters never fail to be acknowledged with comments about the peaceful home doings, and messages to his various friends and relations. Such messages and sentences are, of course, omitted here as of no general interest; but they are wonderfully indicative of the mind of the writer who, from the middle of such triumph, tumult, and bloodshed, could enter into the quiet interests of home life. Like all true heroes, Gomm was certainly no fire-eater.

'Rodrigo: January 27, 1812.

'In my last letter I told you that we were to be employed for a few days in putting up what others had just been pulling down. We have been working very hard, and the defences will presently be not only repaired, but greatly improved, in those points which were assailed by us. The breach no longer yawns; and dismounted guns are again upon their legs—I beg pardon, upon their seats—and looking out of window, I need scarcely add, as brazen-faced as ever. I have a rooted aversion to pedantry, and, therefore, in writing to you shall not detail more particularly what we have done and what remains for us to do.

'The weather, which favoured us beyond example in our attack of the place, has continued to smile upon us while we are providing for its defence; and the sun shines out all the day long and sheds glory upon our labours. "So work the honey-bees." . . . . exactly so, I hope; and that when we shall have completed our work we shall deliver the town to the

Spaniards, with a charge to defend it when called upon, as they did once before. This will certainly be the case.

'In the meantime I am longing to know how it will fare in England with this last exploit of ours, and what the ground of censure will be this time. To avoid plagiarism, I detailed nothing of the siege to you last time when I wrote, but I think a little criticism in this is pardonable. Will they say that we have been too lavish of our own blood, or too sparing of our adversaries, or both?[1]

'It is a remarkable feature in the history of this siege, and one that will distinguish it, perhaps, from that of all towns carried by assault, that the loss of the besiegers doubles that of the besieged. Surely it will be said in after times, if not now, that the "milk of human kindness" was flowing richly through the veins of these Englishmen, who stopped to draw breath in the breach, and gave terms there to Frenchmen, and such Frenchmen. They did not leave the "hermit pity with their mothers," like Troilus, but fought rather with the temper of Hector, "not letting their advanced swords decline on the declined." *Les esprits forts*, however, regret that they did not do from principle what others do from passion under similar circumstances. John Bull, though heartily fond of fighting, is not a man of blood, but he is a greedy fellow, and he plundered this time with all the rapacity of one to whom such liberty was new. . . .

'The town is a safer place of abode than it was the morning we entered it. Surely there never was a place, and all that it contained, so exposed to utter ruin as this was, for several days after we entered it. The French had left magazines of powder and loaded shells in every part of the ramparts uncovered. But the town also was full of powder; and many houses, some from negligence, others from wantonness, were set on fire in the course of the first night, and continued burning for several days. One of these magazines blew up

[1] The French had lost 300 killed; 1,500 men and 80 officers taken, together with 150 guns. The allies had lost, according to the official returns, 324 killed and 1,378 wounded, rather less than half of which casualties were in the final assault.

during the assault, and another the following morning, while we were marching from Guinaldo, both accidentally. We lost many valuable lives on both these occasions, and the French many worthless ones. Fortunately, nothing of any consequence in this way has since occurred, and everything is now arranged and in such order, that you run as much risk of blowing up in London as we do here. In other respects, we do not recover ourselves so rapidly. The people are returning, however—some to repossess themselves of what has been left them in the general scramble, others to pry into the ruins of their late really splendid habitations, which have scarcely yet done smoking, amazed that the possessions they were so proud of should have crumbled into so small a compass, part expecting this state of things, part not. I have been too much used to such scenes for some time past for you to expect a very feeling account of them now. Like Macbeth, we "have supp'd so full with horrors" they scarcely move us.

'Since I last wrote, we have buried General Crawford, with military honours, in the breach where he fell. All that an army can lose, in its most able and indefatigable partisan, this army has lost in General Crawford.

'General Leith has at length joined us, quite renovated, and, if I may use the expression, more himself than ever. . . . Marmont pushed some cavalry forward from Salamanca the other day, and has since withdrawn them. He shows no disposition to disturb us.'

The following memorandum was written by Sir William in 1866.

'It was in the spring of 1812, when seated at General Leith's dinner table, while we were repairing the defences of Ciudad Rodrigo, much ill-treated by our recent siege, that I had Lord Wellington for my *vis-à-vis*, and listened to him while propounding his opinion as to what are the characteristics of a really great man—freedom from all double dealing, equivocation, subterfuge, and so forth—evidently levelling the shafts of his criticism at the actual ruler of France; and he

wound up his lecture by declaring it to be his deliberate conviction that French domination, then seemingly established *ad infinitum* over the continent of Europe, was based upon shifting sand, essentially rotten at its foundation, and sustained by fraud, bad faith, and immeasurable extortion; and that it only required an honest understanding among the Powers of Europe, so down-trodden, to put an end to the most contemptible tyranny that ever oppressed the civilised world.

'I well remember the energetic utterance of these closing expressions in the midst of a pretty large dinner-party.

'And it was in 1809 that the object of the future Duke's so qualified appreciation wrote to Massena, then invading Portugal: "Sweden has lost through her alliance with England the finest and most important of her provinces. This is a new example to kings that an alliance with England will lead them to ruin. When I shall show myself beyond the Pyrenees, the terrified Leopard will seek the ocean, to avoid disgrace, defeat, and death. The triumph of my arms will be the triumph of the genius of good over that of evil, of moderation, of order, and of morality over anarchy, civil war, and destructive passion."

[Recorded in Vol. xx. of the correspondence of Napoleon I.]

'Time soon showed which of these was the truer prophecy.'

'Ciudad Rodrigo: February 10, 1812.

'Although I have not heard from you since I last wrote, owing to our harbours having been blockaded by southerly winds for some time past, which have thrown you back two or three packets in our debt, and, though nothing has happened in the meantime that should make you anxious to hear from me, still, as I think there is a chance of our moving long and rapidly soon, it may be as well, while I have leisure, to prepare you for a longer silence than I am used to keep, and you will then attribute it to the right cause.

'Badajos the Proud is already upon the horizon in our imaginations, and will probably soon be so to our senses. The battering train is on the move, part from this quarter, and

part at this moment sliding up the Tagus to Abrantes. The army is ready. Badajos, besieged for the third time, will hardly withstand the insolence of our attack, so lately crowned with complete and rapid success; and its impetuosity will be increased by recollection of the double disappointment it has already experienced before her own wall. Our proceedings, however, have been clumsily carried on hitherto against Badajos, and our engineers worked here as if they had a character to retrieve. They had better continue in this humour; they will hardly overdo their purpose, however well they may succeed this time against the place. You shall hear of determined things done in the course of a month or two.

'The Lion will glare with an angry eye upon these walls, and if the Frenchmen presume upon his "royalty of disposition," as they did at this place, and think it politic to wait, as they did here, till he is among them, before they propose to capitulate, I am much mistaken if he does not rage as never lion raged before, and Badajos will in after times be called "the place of blood."

'I had rather have nothing to say to the trenches. I shall be better pleased if it falls to our lot to compose part of the covering army. Soult is a saucy fellow, and will certainly come down from Seville. I have already told you General Leith is with us. I shall be disappointed if you do not find us taking the lead in some of these matters. Our work here will soon be completed, and part of a Spanish garrison will be here to-morrow. The Governor-General, Vivez, has arrived. Castaños is here. We have seen a great deal of him, and of the people about him, during the last few days. Tell Goully I like him very much. He is not a man, however, that people would point at in quiet times and say, "This is the man that shall lead us when the invader comes;" but he has a great deal about him that should recommend him to us. He seems to have lived a good deal in public life, has a great deal of natural good humour, and, I dare say, does not want intelligence or activity as a soldier. But we are always looking out for heroes and thunderbolts of war in this country, and we are

out of humour with anything else. Certainly, a few of these are to be wished for, but we want a great many like Castaños. He is friendly to the English, not only from principle, but evidently from inclination. General Leith is certainly the very best man in the world to act the part that is required of him on this occasion; but I declare that I have never seen the Spaniards otherwise than conciliating when we ourselves have known how to behave. But not unfrequently we expect to find in them the monstrous combination of servility towards those in alliance with them, and independence of spirit towards their declared oppressors, and, happily, we are always disappointed. The new Regency, I hear, is doing everything that becomes them. The reputation of the English army is now firmly rooted on the Continent; and, if I were a prophet, I might say that the Spanish cause will prevail. As it is, I can only say it must and shall.

'I dined yesterday at Gallegos with General Graham. I do not know whether I have mentioned to you that he had several narrow escapes at this siege. All the world would say that he exposes himself too much on all occasions if he did not make such good use of his time while he was exposing himself. He is one of those men who set us in good humour with ourselves and with the times we live in as often as we approach them; and, while we honour them for their own merits, we feel a secret pride at the recollection that we belong to the same order of being with themselves, and are glad to witness the elevation of which our nature is susceptible. This is a safe sort of vanity, and such men do more good among us than they ever calculate upon.'

'Ciudad Rodrigo: March 4, 1812.

'The movement I prepared you for in my last letter is taking place. The whole army, except ourselves, are in full march upon Badajos. We have carried the defences of this place to such a state of forwardness that there is no danger of their being assaulted by the French, and the Spaniards can finish them at their leisure. We expect to march, therefore,

immediately—very likely, I think, the day after to-morrow. The other divisions are marching by Castel Branco and Villa Velha. I am in hopes we shall take the more direct line by the Pass of Perales, Alcantara, and Albuquerque. It is very probable we shall. The army, however, need feel themselves little indebted to us for securing by this means their flank on the march, for there is nothing threatening it. The French are not in a state to attempt anything costly. I do not know what Soult will be able to produce before Badajos, but they certainly will not hold all they have during the summer if things continue going on as they do at present. They are deserting fast from all quarters; numbers have come in here, and the discontent appears to be general among them.

'The Spanish garrison has increased at this place since I last wrote. Some are well clothed, others ill, and some (I was going to say) not at all; but they are all in the best humour with us and with themselves. Lord Wellington has been paying us frequent visits; he comes here to-day for the last time, and sets off immediately for the Alentejo. He is in high spirits. You know the Regency have made him Duke of Rodrigo. We have received Blake's account of the fall of Valencia; his friends here seem as glad to lose him as the French can be to get him. Cardinal Mazzini would never have employed him, for he certainly is not *heureux*.

'We have had nothing but gaieties here—fêtes, balls without end, and now and then a masquerade. The Prince of Orange is a very Mecænas on all these occasions, and an able performer into the bargain.

'If I gave you an account of our evenings you would declare this to be our Capua; but it would only require that I should send you a plan of our daily performance to undeceive you.

'General Walker is quite well, so are Dallas and Le Blanc.

'I never was in better health, or better prepared for hard work, whether I consider my own legs or my horse's. I look upon myself as the most fortunate man with my horses in the whole army. They are never ill. I have four that I ride;

three of which I think will show their heels, whenever I find it convenient, to most of their kind in the country.

'I expect to be in the neighbourhood of Badajos in less than a fortnight.'

'Castel Branco: March 16, 1812.

'We are marching at our ease upon Campo Mayor, and our resting here one day gives me an opportunity of answering three of your letters that have reached me since I left Rodrigo. . . .

'I shall be better prepared for giving you an insight into what is going on before Badajos when we reach Campo Mayor, than I am at present. Here we know absolutely nothing. The French, in the meantime, are making some movements of importance. Soult and the 4th Division of Marmont's army, we hear, are at Toledo, and Marmont himself at Avila. They seem desirous of having it understood that they mean to attack Rodrigo immediately. I confess that any attempt of this sort will in future make me as nervous as if I had left *ma passion* behind me, which I am not conscious of; although certainly a great deal that was very amiable. But we have had so much to say to the placing Rodrigo in the state in which it stands at present, that we shall be forgiven for feeling a sort of divisional-maternal anxiety about all its concerns, and its *début* principally, so that whenever it is threatened, you will most probably find me talking feelingly, rather than reasonably, and you will know to what cause to attribute half my vain alarms. I look back with much satisfaction to the few weeks we have passed at Rodrigo.

'I saw more of Lord Wellington during this short period, in all sorts of ways, than most people who are not constantly about him would perhaps see in a twelvemonth—more, too, of the principal Spaniards in that part of the country than under other circumstances I could have seen. It has also given us an opportunity of performing a most important service to the general cause, for we left Rodrigo in such a state, that with some energy on the part of the Spaniards it will

become a very respectable fortress before the French ought to be able to come before it.

'I must not forget to tell you that the Prince of Orange and myself, although the best friends in the world before, have become cronies since he discovered that I was a nephew of the Countess Brühl. He inquired after her very kindly, and found that he had heard of her since I had. He spoke of her with a great deal of interest. . . .

'Tell Henry, if the skin is really a handsome one, with claws and all the apparatus that contribute to produce a terrific effect, I should like much to make it a present to Don Carlos. I will tell him how to address it when I next write.'

CHAPTER XII.

1812.

SIEGE—STORMING AND CAPTURE OF BADAJOS—MOIMENTA DA BEIRA—SENT TO EXPLORE BEYOND DOMO—BEAUTY OF SCENERY IN TRAS-OS-MONTES—SALAMONDE, ETC.—ADVANCE DRIVING MARMONT OVER THE TORMES—SIEGE OF SALAMANCA—CAPTURE—BATTLE OF SALAMANCA—GENERAL LEITH.

'Campo Mayor: March 26, 1812.

'THE siege goes on as well as it possibly can, and with every prospect of ultimate success. Yesterday morning our batteries opened upon one of the principal outworks of the place, and it was in our possession by the evening. The main attack is carried on against the defences on the left bank of the Guadiana: three divisions of the army, the 3rd, 4th, and Light, are encamped before the town. General Hill has pushed on his advance as far as Almaraz and Merida. General Graham, with the 6th, 1st, and 7th Divisions, is occupying Salvatierra, Villa Franca, etc. The Guards are at Zafra. Our share of the business is to occupy the attention of the garrison as much as possible on the right bank of the river. For this purpose we made a close reconnaissance of San Cristoval, and the redoubts on this side, the day before yesterday, and we have since closely invested them. Part only of the division is employed on this service, and the remainder in this town. The rain has been falling in torrents since we came before this place. Yesterday, however, the prospect began to brighten, and this day the sun has smiled upon us throughout. Perhaps the whole of the equinoctial weather has passed over. A cessation of such as we have lately experienced will lighten our labours incredibly. Lord Wellington is himself encamped with the troops. Not only the Guadiana, but the

smaller rivers, have been so swollen by the rains that our communication with the camp has hitherto been very circuitous. I hope we shall be able immediately to become more familiar with it. We know from the best authority in the world that the place is ill supplied with ammunition.

'So late as the 20th Marmont was idle at Salamanca. Soult can do nothing without him for the relief of the town. It must fall shortly, and I am building such *châteaux en Espagne* for the campaign of the summer that is coming, as would be sufficient to make you all dread my taking the direction of La Mancha if I only gave you a peep into one of my porticos, and my earning the title of "flower of chivalry," or "knight of the rueful countenance" in reversion, before the return of the cold weather. . . .

'6 *o'clock, evening.*—We have just received the authentic accounts of the Picurina Fort, the work I have already spoken about, having been carried by storm last night, with some loss on our side and considerable loss on that of the French. We shall establish our batteries here immediately, and breach the main wall, I hope, in the course of a very few days. The cannonade continues steadily. On our side we are going to raise a redoubt in front of the Fort Mon Cœur, to engage the attention of this and St. Cristoval still more closely.

'Tell Henry I shall send him further directions in a few days about the tiger's skin, or rather about the manner of addressing it to Lisbon.'

'Camp before Badajos: April 7, 1812.

'Badajos was carried by storm last night. The details of the Gazette will show you that ours was no inconsiderable share in this operation. It is indeed a splendid triumph, but full of sadness for us all; we have lost so many. Poor General Walker, severely, I fear I must add, dangerously wounded. Yet do not, I pray, think that there is no room for hope. I saw him an hour ago, easier than he had been, and from the beginning he has been in good spirits. Every attention is paid him, even in these tumultuous moments, and

I am sure he has skilful people about him. A musket shot has entered his chest, and may possibly have affected the lungs, but it is thought very slightly. He has besides bayonet wounds about him which are none of them serious.

'He commanded that part of the division which escaladed the wall while the attacks were carrying on in other parts upon the breaches and citadel. It was the most hazardous service, and I have reason to think that it will be declared publicly that it was the brilliant success in this quarter which determined the fate of the enterprise; and he fell on the crest of the rampart, and at the head of his men.

'To know this will at least be a satisfaction to all who are interested about him, and pray think with me, and I may add with himself, that all may yet be well with him. Would to God I could have the intelligence conveyed as I would wish to those I cannot name without the deepest distress; but for heaven's sake let them hear of it from you as soon as you can, so much depends upon the manner in which these things are told.

'Dallas was not engaged, and Le Blanc, I rejoice to tell you, is unhurt, in the regiment which, I believe, has suffered the most severely of all. Captain Johnson, General Walker's aide-de-camp, has been very slightly wounded by a grape-shot. I have been suffered to escape with a slight bruise upon my left arm from the ricochet of a grape-shot. I pique myself on my good fortune on these occasions, the fates have never threatened me nearer than in my horse and my arm. My own regiment has not been engaged; but the friends I have to regret, and whose fate I am still anxious about since the sun last set, are numberless. Yet the success is great, and the acquisition important beyond measure. Soult has been making rapid advances to the relief of the place, and you shall hear more about him in the course of a few days. Marmont is bullying Rodrigo, but I believe the Spaniards, as well as Lord Wellington, are laughing at him. Adieu! Now rest assured you shall hear from me by every opportunity: the sad subject with which I began my letter will secure this to you if the usual inducements were wanting.

'The weather is extremely hot, but I am quite well, and so are my horses.

'General Leith has had several narrow escapes, but there are few who have not since yesterday.

'I had begun a letter to Henry some days ago, but have been too much employed since to finish it. However, I meant to thank him for all the business he has been transacting for me, and which he had written me an account of. I have received notice of the arrival of the parcels at Lisbon, and expect every day to hear of their being lodged in the hands of my *chargé d'affaires* there. My best love to him and to Aunt and Goully. Tell Goully I shall be grievously disappointed if I am not suffered to write her a letter from Madrid in the course of the summer.

'P.S.—I do not know how it happens that I should have omitted to mention to you till now that poor George Carleton was wounded in the face last night, at the head of his regiment. The wound is not dangerous, but I fear, will be troublesome. I have not yet had it in my power to see him.'[1]

'Portalègre: April 14, 1812.

'General Walker had recovered so much beyond our expectations when we left him, the day before yesterday, that I now write to you with all the confidence of a true prophet.

'I do not well recollect all I told you in my drowsy letter

[1] The incidents of this awful assault, as given in the histories of the campaign, show this to have been the most sanguinary of all the struggles of the Peninsular war. On our side on that night 49 officers and 744 men were killed, 258 officers and 2,600 men were wounded, and this most fearful carnage had exasperated and maddened the survivors. For the two days and nights succeeding the attack all discipline seemed at an end, and Badajos suffered as terribly as any captured city ever has.

'Maddened by drink and revenge, the soldiers and the crowd of infamous camp-followers gave themselves up to the gratification of their demoniacal passions. Shameless rapacity, brutal intemperance, savage lust, cruelty and murder, shrieks and piteous lamentations, groans, shouts, imprecations, the hissing of fires bursting from the houses, the crashing of doors and windows, and the reports of muskets used in violence resounded,' Napier says, 'throughout the town, The officers vainly strove to restrain the enormities which tarnished the lustre of so glorious a victory, and only summary executions stopped the disorders.'

In the midst of such a tumult was this letter written.

from Badajos, for I wrote to you before I lay down to rest, after the busy night we had just been passing, and I frequently caught myself in the course of my letter making nods and low bows very *mal à propos*; but I believe I gave you reason to trust that, though his wounds were serious, they were not dangerous. This, indeed, is more than I was justified in doing by appearances at the moment, although the event saves me from the self-reproach of having deceived you. At first it was feared that his lungs had been affected; but the medical people have since satisfied themselves that they are not injured, and although recovery from such a state as he has been thrown into cannot, from the nature of things, be immediate, yet there is every hope entertained by himself, and by all those who understand his situation, of his recovering gradually and steadily, but completely. I saw him as often as I was permitted while we remained in the neighbourhood of Badajos, and could have wished to have rendered him any little service in my power, but he has every attention paid him by his aide-de-camp (Captain Johnson, General Benson's friend), and I cannot think he could be better provided for than he is. He told me once that he thought it extremely probable Mrs. Walker would leave England the moment she heard of his situation, and not rest till she reached him. I should be very much shocked to hear of her taking such a step. It is a stormy element we are living in, and more perplexed and uncertain than the one which separates our land from yours, and a delicate person should not hear of all that we are about, much less witness it. I trust the accounts Johnson has been giving her, as well as those she has received from others and from yourself, will have effectually prevented her from taking alarm so rashly. By the time you receive this you will all have had as much time as we have had to recover from the bustle and impatience into which such a siege and such a storm will have thrown you, and I hope you are fully impressed with the value of our services as we are ourselves.

'When I am thinking of friends, some of whom are no longer among us, and others for whom we are most anxious,

I exclaim, "Dearly bought Badajos!" but only in these moments.

'We marched into Portalègre about an hour ago. Head-quarters are here to-day, and twelve thousand men.

'Marmont has been playing tricks in the north, while we have been playing deep game in the south. I do not know yet to what extent, but he can have done us little injury, militarily apeaking, although he can have been the author of a great deal of individual misery; and this, I have no doubt, he has been. We expect not to remain here beyond to-morrow.

'Godwin writes me that he is just married, his wound nearly well, and that the doctor will give him leave to join us in a couple of months, and that he means to take it. By-the-bye, on the subject of wounds, my courteous grape-shot is stealing away every day the little remembrances he left behind him. Stiffness and his own rich purple hue were all the presents he left me. Stiffness has stalked off; black and blue have succeeded to the pure purple; and when I write again I expect I shall have degenerated into yellow, and dirty green, and all motley stains.'

To Major Henry Gomm.

'Portalègre: April 15, 1812.

'My dear Henry,—In my letter to Sophia, since the fall of Badajos, I have already mentioned some of the particulars relating to our late operations, which I thought would be most interesting to her, and I am now going to give a more interesting detail of our proceedings; for however copious a despatch may be which conveys the intelligence of an interesting event, there is always something which may be added by those who were concerned in the execution of a combined operation; and there are many little particulars, desirable to be known, of which it does not come within the province of a despatch to make mention. Besides, we were admitted to so much more agreeable a share in this enterprise than in most of those that have been lately undertaken, and the part we

played proved to be of so much more consequence to the result than was at first imagined it could have been, that our vanity leads us to trumpet our exploits to the world with all their circumstances.

'We were at first employed in drawing the enemy's attention to the right bank of the river, while the main attack was carrying on upon the left; but before the breaching batteries opened we were moved across the Guadiana, and took up our bivouac about a league from the town, on the Valverde road. It was originally intended that the assault should have been given only in three quarters, and that ours should have been a false attack. But General Leith prevailed upon Lord Wellington to make us a present of a few ladders, and to give us an opportunity of carrying our threat into execution; and it was fortunate in the end that he did so. The despatch will have detailed to you how the attack was ordered: the three breaches—in the face, flank, and curtain of the bastion of La Trinidad and St. Maria—stormed by the Light and 4th Divisions; the castle escaladed by the 3rd; and the bastion of St. Vicente on the left and close to the river by ourselves. A little before ten o'clock, on the night of the 8th, the attack commenced upon the breaches, that upon the castle a little later, and ours about the same time. The night was dark, and without moon, and the movements of the columns concealed for a time; but they were soon unmasked by the pale but powerful glare of their fire-balls, and in an instant a flood of fire poured over the breaches, sweeping everything before it like the lava down the side of a mountain. The attack was repeated and repeated till nature was exhausted where life was not extinct, and the determined spirits which remained, I verily believe, had not physical force left them to climb up the acclivity they were never tired of assailing, even had no enemy been there to oppose them, at the time they were called off. Happily, the attack upon the castle was more successful; the preparations for defence were not so great. There is no ditch on this side, but a very high wall, not to be escaladed but at the point where the attack was made.

By the time that the attempt upon the breaches was abandoned, I think about midnight, General Picton was in full possession of the castle with three thousand men. On our side the difficulties to be overcome were greater, and the enterprise impracticable had the principal attention of the enemy been directed to this quarter. The rampart at this point was surrounded with a regular ditch, into which there was no descent but with the assistance of the ladders we carried, and the rampart itself nearly 30 ft. high, with *revêtement*. Our 24 ft. ladders, therefore, of which we were supplied with about twenty, had nearly played us a trick; but the parapet above the cordon was climbable on such an occasion to such as were not interfered with from above. It was some time before we could establish our footing upon the rampart, but, through General Walker's exertions, it was at length effected, and we had thrown, or rather lifted, four regiments into the town before midnight. Imagine what an effect our bugles, sounding in this part of the place immediately behind the breaches, must have had upon those defending them. It was decisive; for although General Picton had as yet made no attack upon the town from the castle, of which he had possessed himself long before the day broke, the breaches were abandoned and the place no longer contended for. The Governor, who had withdrawn to St. Cristoval, surrendered upon being summoned. Then followed the plundering scene, which was a jumble of all that was horrible and ridiculous. Our soldiers cannot shed blood when the occasion calls for it with half the enthusiasm of other people; but they enter with spirit into every other species of extravagance that they are tempted to by being placed in these situations, and when brutalised by drink they blunder into horrible absurdities. The ceremonies at Rodrigo were but the rehearsal of all that took place here.

'Now I must give you a short account of the preparations made for our reception by Marshal Philippon, for there were certainly many put in force that are not usual; and in weighing the merits of this important feature in the war, I believe it will be found that if the place was attacked with a persever-

ance and energy seldom equalled, it was defended with all the spirit and skill that were looked for from a competent French garrison, headed by an able engineer, who had already had honours conferred upon him for the defence of the same place. Besides the usual precautions of cutting ramps and intrenching the front attacked, there was a trench dug in the superior slope of the parapet, in which riflemen seated themselves, and had a full command of the ditch to the foot of the wall. This trench extended all round the place. Traverses were made in all directions, cutting off the front breached. The *chevaux-de-frise*, placed upon the crest of the breaches, were made of the blades of swords, and of the most formidable description I have ever seen. But the greatest refinement upon military mischief that I observed about this pandemonium was the hanging a number of planks studded with nails a short distance from the top of the breach by loose cords, which, however, were made fast within, so that the unhappy persons who gladly caught at anything by which they expected to hold were not only precipitated to the bottom of the breach, but miserably torn by the nails, which only accompanied them in part of their fall. Quantities of sheils were, as usual, lining the top of the parapet, and wherever there was an opening it was filled up by splinters, which were to be thrown as stones by such as had nothing better to do. In fact, it was intended that we should not have got into the town, and at the beginning it seemed as if they had bound over the elements to interrupt us; for ten days after the besieging divisions took the field the rain never ceased to fall in torrents. But we have since learnt that the manner in which the business of the siege was carried on under this heavy persecution was a subject of astonishment to the garrison, and gave proof of the spirit in which the business was undertaken. Here then I shall finish my long story, part of which, I hope, will interest you—the subject certainly will. With regard to what you said upon the subject of finance, I can only tell you that you are at liberty to owe me as long, and I should like to add as much, as you please; but I am afraid your liberty would soon have bounds fixed to it independent of our best dispositions on both sides.

'Niza: 17.

'Tell Sophia I have just received the best accounts of General Walker. I have not been able to finish my letter till this moment. We are marching upon Castel Branco.'

To his Sister.

'Castel Branco: April 20, 1812.

'Our march across the Tagus this time has been rather a fatiguing one, owing to the extreme badness of the weather, which, however, is giving us every promise to-day of mending. We arrived here yesterday, and are employing ourselves at this moment in drying our sails and mending our rigging. To-morrow we move on to Alcains and Lardofa. Head-quarters are just gone off to Escalhos, two leagues upon the Peña-macor road. The Light and 3rd Divisions and some cavalry are before us. Marmont is supposed to be at Sabugal with about seventeen thousand French, his advance on this side the Coa. I believe I told you, when I wrote from Portalègre, that he had been taking his run beyond the Agueda while we were busy before Badajos. He has done the people some mischief, and carried off a good deal of plunder from the towns in the valley of the Zezere, particularly Covilhao, where the principal cloth manufactory in the country is established. The Agueda is so swollen by the late rains that he will not be able to repass it by the fords for many days; and while the bridge of Rodrigo is ours, I think we shall not find him attempting to cross the river till it becomes fordable. There are two other bridges, but they would carry him through a most difficult and intricate country, and they ought not, besides, to be at his disposal. If, therefore, we can bring up our cavalry and a sufficient force of infantry, to enable us to press him before these obstacles to his retreat disappear, he may have reason to repent his incursion. We are all very anxious, believe me.

'I have the best possible accounts of General Walker: he has recovered so much strength as to be able to write to Mrs. Walker a long letter, which it gave me great pleasure to hear,

and all who attend him declare that there is no longer anything to fear for his safety.

'I shall in all probability have occasion to write to you again shortly. If Marshal Marmont finds he cannot do better than wait for our attack, I shall perhaps have to communicate a pleasant piece of intelligence to you. Pray, when you write to Mrs. Walker, remember me very kindly to them, and say how happy I am at being able to send them such good accounts.

'Moimenta da Beira: May 5, 1812.

'At the time I last accounted for myself at Castel Branco, the Agueda seemed to be so much in our interest, that we were not without hopes of being able to bring Marmont to a stand, for want of something better to do. But he built good bridges (better, I think, than we should have contrived to make in the same situation), and put on longer legs for the flight than it would have suited us to adopt for the pursuit. He certainly did some harm, and carried off, I believe, a great deal of plunder; but did not desolate the country so much *à la Française* as we had reason to expect. And had he shown a little more enterprise in attempting, at least, to destroy our bridge at Villa Velha, I should have thought his movement able, and well conducted. In a military point of view, as it was, he did us more injury than we had a right to calculate upon, owing to the dastardly behaviour of ten or twelve thousand Portuguese militia, posted at Guarda, under Trent and Wilson, who ran away from about as many hundred French, and opened the country behind, and our magazines at Celorico, to the incursions of a few French highwaymen, who chose to rob on that road; and the consequence was, that we found it necessary to destroy a very considerable magazine of ammunition at Celorico. It is a pity, I think, that the militia should have been assembled in a body at Guarda: so many ragamuffins were never, in this world, assembled together, that they were not dispersed by panic, when called upon to act. What do you think of our friend Vivez, and our *protégés* at Rodrigo? I think our pains have not been thrown

away here; and the failure of the late French visit has made them as much stronger in heart as we have made them in rampart.

'Nothing could have happened more fortunately to give confidence to a garrison just escaped from leading-strings.

'From Castel Branco our march has been directed through Guarda and Trancoso to this place, within four leagues of Lamego. We are here, with several other divisions of the army, in the neighbourhood of our magazines; while everything, I hope, is preparing for the recommencement of active operations. In the whole course of our march from the south, I recollect nothing so worthy of remark as the variety of climate we have passed through in so short a space of time.

'We crossed the Tagus in a tempest, and at Castel Branco, I told you, the sun began to shine. At Alpedrinha, I lay under a tree all day, reading Ariosto, and the scenery about me was almost in reality what Ariosto fancied. At Guarda and Trancoso I was pelted with hail and snow, and all the artillery of winter; and we have been enjoying all the luxuries that an English or even Portuguese November can furnish ever since we came here. I have thrown aside Ariosto, and taken to Hudibras, till trees become shelter again.

'While I am writing there is a gleam of sunshine, and the weather-wise tell us we shall broil directly. So much for weather, in prospect and retrospect. To-morrow, if possible, I shall go to Lamego, and look at the Douro. This is a new country to a great many among us, and I believe our *savans* are very little *orientés* in it. Great part of it about our cantonments is very pretty and well cultivated, and in a military point of view particularly interesting.

'Yesterday I received very good accounts from Captain Johnson. The General had not been so well some days before he wrote, but he had recovered his lost ground, and there were no fears entertained about him: he was still at Badajos. I do not know whether I gave you any account of poor Carleton when I wrote last; I am afraid his will be a troublesome case.

He has been at Elvas for some time, and is going, I understand to Lisbon, and thence, I suppose, to England.

'Moimenta da Beira: May 12, 1812.

'Before I mount my horse, I write you two lines, to tell you that it is for the purpose of setting out upon my expedition to the Tras-os-Montes.

'General Leith is gone to Lisbon, to visit Lady Augusta, who is just arrived, and is very desirous that I should make myself acquainted with some of the country beyond the Douro during his absence. So am I. People who know as little about the matter as myself, assure me I shall find the roads very bad, and I believe them; but if they are sufficiently good for my purposes, I mean to take the following course. I pass the Douro to-day at Lamego, and the Serra de Marão and the Tameja to-morrow, at Amarante. I shall then proceed by Guimarães (famous for plums) to Braga (famous for shawls), and this part of my tour cannot, therefore, fail to be interesting. I shall then go by the pass of Salamonde, famous for the retreat of Soult, to Montdalegre and Braganza, and come down the Douro from Miranda to Torre de Moncorvo, and so home.

'This is a circuit of about a hundred leagues, which I allow myself a fortnight to accomplish; and this is, perhaps, more than I ought to allow myself, for the army will certainly be in movement the moment the magazines at Almeida and Rodrigo are complete.

'Tell Goully I should like to know where to inquire for the winged horse that "il buon Ruggiero" was used to borrow when he visited foreign courts. But, wanting him, I shall take two that are as light, and, what will perhaps be of more consequence in this instance, as sure of foot as most of those which walk the earth.

'The weather, in which I am so much interested, is at length settled, and I think I can depend on it.

'I do not promise to write to you while I am absent, but as soon after my return as I can. I hope then to find several of

your letters in store, giving me better accounts of Henry and all my old acquaintances. All the accounts of General Walker continue as good as possible. Poor Carleton met with an awkward accident the other day, but is doing well I hear.'

'Moimenta da Beira: May 18, 1812.

'In my last letter I promised to give you some account of the country beyond the Douro, as soon as I had completed the tour I was just setting out upon. I returned yesterday, very well satisfied to find my division sound asleep as when I left them. I propose being of the party immediately; and you will be in luck if you do not find me nodding before my task is closed. I believe I furnished you with my route before I started, but, like many other mighty undertakings, the execution has fallen short of the design; not owing, however, to any caprice of my own, or to any insurmountable difficulties that the face of the country presented to my progress. On consulting the men of business at Lamego, I found our magazines would be completed earlier than I expected, and my division probably on the move in an opposite direction by the time I reached Braganza; and, panic-struck by this reflection, I resolved upon taking the shortest line from Chaves home. I crossed the Douro the day I wrote to you, and slept in the heart of the great wine country, so interesting to an Englishman, and curious to visitors of all nations, who may not be so much indebted to its produce as we are. The mountainous banks of the Douro, terraced from the river's edge to the tops of the highest hills, so that, as far as the eye can reach, in whatever direction, nothing appears but one extensive vineyard, and the rich and numerous villages and country seats, which are the only interruption to this uniformity of scene for many leagues above and below Regoa, were something entirely new to me. Father Douro, too, whom the people reverence as their Nile or Ganges, for the security he gives them against invasion from the north, I saluted as a venerable friend I had met some years before at Zamora, Toro, etc. I found him very troublesome, however, for he came down full of the rains that

had been falling so plentifully before I began my travels, and the boats are so clumsily managed at this point, that I had reason to fear my horses would have paid with their knees for the introduction. If I took the river at its flood, I also took the tide in my affairs at the same crisis, and went down with it to Guimarães, where I met, for the first time since his exaltation, with the Brigadier-General, Governor of the Minho, and most Excellent Sir, whom I dare say you may recollect as Major Wilson, at Wycombe, and a playfellow of mine. I presumed a good deal upon the academical introduction, and surprised the ceremonious Portuguese by the liberties I took with their general. He, on the other hand, made everything as pleasant as he possibly could for me at Guimarães. It is a delightful town, full of good society, in the midst of a rich and highly-cultivated populous country, where, whatever mischief the French did during their invasion of the north, is made raree-show of, just as much as anything they may have happened to have spared in other parts of the country. The palace and castle of the first kings of Portugal are interesting ruins at Guimarães.

I fell in love with Amarante, and know not how I led you on to Guimarães without first singing its praises. The French burnt the town, and it looks as if it had been done yesterday, so irreparable is the mischief they did. But the Tamega is still the most beautiful river in the world, at this spot, and the woods which overhang it are only waiting for the year, to recover their beauty and richness. Its bridge was defended for fifteen days by Silveira and his peasantry, when Loison came from Oporto to invade the Tras-os-Montes. He succeeded at last, and Silveira is Count of Amarante, for having kept him there so long. Wilson was on his way to Vianna when I found him at Guimarães, and I accompanied him across the ridge of Falpeira, which, on my horses' account, I should have wished otherwise employed, than in crossing my way on this occasion, had it not placed at my feet the fine town of Braga, and all the luxuriantly fruitful country surrounding it while it gave me besides an early intro-

duction to the Sierra of Gerez, and the endless chain of mountains I was presently to become better acquainted with. The magnificence of this scene will not quickly escape my memory. Braga is one of the best and largest towns in Portugal. The Archbishop assumes the title of Primate of all Spain; so does the Bishop of Toledo. I dare say the latter could plead his own cause at home better than they are at the pains of doing it for him at Braga. The day of my arrival happened to be the anniversary of a celebrated pilgrimage to the altar of a handsome chapel in the neighbourhood, where I was introduced to about forty thousand of the ugliest and best dressed peasantry in the world. Wilson did not carry away my fortunes with him to Vianna, for the Governor of Braga, of all people in the world, offered to escort me to Chaves, which was his birth-place; and on our way he showed me how he had fought his battle at the pass of Carvalho d'Esté, where he had detained Soult several days, when he first advanced into the country. The spot has little of the magic influence of Thermopylæ or Marathon upon a traveller, but it was pleasant to have its history from such high authority, and from one who, I am certain, did his best under very difficult circumstances. If any one should talk to you henceforth about visiting the Tras-os-Montes, whether he comes as a soldier or an amateur, or both, send him to Salamonde and the Bridge of Miarela, and make him give you an account of the Cavado, its valley and its cataracts, and the Sierra of Gerez, overhanging it like a thunder-cloud. If he is rash, he will tell you all about it; for my part, I had rather say, "Go and see." From Ruivães the road was long and dreary, till we descended into the beautiful vale of Chaves. If I had not told you that the Tamega was the most beautiful river in the world at Amarante, I should have said it was so at Chaves; and my friendly governor was as delighted to point out to me the charms of his native place as I was to acknowledge them. I returned by the strong military posts and picturesque situations of Reggas and Villa Maca, and paid my respects to the Count of Amarante, in his seat of government at Villa Real. From hence,

to the Douro, I have already described the sort of country. If the scenery about the Salamonde is a display of all that is magnificent in nature, the banks of the Douro present a spectacle of opulence and industry hardly to be equalled. I am extremely happy that I have had it in my power to make this little excursion, for besides the local information it has put me in possession of, the picture which these fortunate provinces presented to me, on all sides, far exceeded my expectation. So has the length of my story yours. I have no doubt but I shall continue it, notwithstanding, till I have returned some sort of answer to a letter of yours that I found on my table when I came home. All my friends are most kind, and I shall grow very vain if these things are to happen often Lady Malmesbury makes me long already for such another night as Badajos, and more mischievous if possible, so that there is a chance of its being attended with such sacrifices on my account. I am happy to hear from you that Henry is getting rid of the pain in his chest.

'Our poor General, I am very much afraid, has not been so successful lately, but I trust there will be no reverse.

'General Leith is still absent from us, but we expect to be on the move immediately. General Hill's feats at the bridge of Almaraz must delight you all. I will write again when we move. In the meantime thank all my good friends very kindly for the cares they have expressed on my account.'

Camp, Fuentes d'Oñor: June 10, 1812.

'The army is assembled here to-day, and marches to-morrow in three columns upon Salamanca.

'The centre column is under General Leith, and, of course, a world of care upon my shoulders.

'We sleep to-morrow night upon the banks of the Agueda; on the 12th upon the Tenebron river; the next night upon the Huebra; and on Saturday wherever the French will let us.

'The weather is such as Vulcan's smithy used to afford—too hot for such as are jealous of their complexions, and for

this reason we travel early, and go to bed in mid-day. We are all well, however; full of adventure; and Rodrigo and Almeida overflowing with our magazines. We shall be mischievous people as long as this is the case.

'I am just returned from a very long ride to head-quarters, and very tired. You will be glad to hear that I had better accounts than I expected of our poor General from the chief of our Medical Department at head-quarters, and this is the best and latest authority that can be consulted.'

'Camp on the Tormes, one league below Salamanca: June 19, 1812.

'I wrote to you the evening before the army broke up from Fuentes d'Oñor. We have since continued our march, as I gave you to expect, without interruption, and entered Salamanca the day before yesterday. Marmont left it the evening before with 9,000 men, taking the direction of the Douro. They have been for some time busy in converting convents in this town (such as would suit their purposes) into fortresses. One of these they have placed in a tolerable state of defence, and have left 500 or 600 men in it as a garrison. We have been making our preparations for the attack of it, and from the heaviness of the cannonade this morning I take for granted that our battery has opened. I am going into town with General Leith as soon as I have finished this letter, and shall not close it till the last moment, as I expect to be able to give you a good account of our proceedings since yesterday. These gentry give us a little trouble, but nothing more; however, it is not desirable that they should continue in possession of the post they hold while the army advances.

'The 6th Division is in town, and is employed in this service. The rest of the army is encamped in front of the town. The weather is settled, and not very hot. Nothing can exceed the satisfaction of the people or the enthusiasm with which they have received Lord Wellington in Salamanca. We have risen wonderfully in public opinion since we made our entry three years ago. The French have not scrupled to destroy those parts of the town that interfered with their plans

of defence; otherwise they have done it no mischief. I shall write to you as we move forward.

'I dare not tell you how far our expectations reach. We have at this moment; I believe, 40,000 of the best infantry in the world, and between 3,000 and 4,000 cavalry, flushed with success, and fully supplied, I should think, with the means necessary for enabling us to penetrate deeply into the country. I do not believe Marmont will face us in the field with all he can assemble on this side the Tagus. If so, our movement will at least relieve the south, and we are allowing the Portuguese all the while to make the most of their harvest. You see I am at some pains to confine my views within the bounds of sobriety. Poor Mr. Perceval![1] Thank you for the circumstances you relate to me respecting him. He was truly an estimable man, and he certainly left none behind him, whether among his colleagues or competitors, so free from reproach, whatever may be the qualities in which he is to be outlived by them.

'Camp before Salamanca: June 26, 1812.

'To this moment no opportunity has offered for sending off my letter. Since I wrote it, Marmont has returned with the whole of his force and has been manœuvring in our front for the last five days. He has 35,000 men within a league of us at this moment, and is expecting to be joined immediately by 10,000 more under Bonnet. They say the King is coming too. Our numbers will be as nearly equal as possible, and the result of a pitched battle should be glorious to us. What a moment of anxiety this is! But it is of a delightful kind, for, believe me, it is tinctured with more of hope than of fear as to the result of these operations. The whole army is in position. The weather is still settled and not so hot as it might be. You will hear the particulars of an unsuccessful attempt to storm the forts in the town the other night. We have not respected these works sufficiently hitherto. Henry

[1] On May 11, 1812, Mr. Perceval, the Prime Minister, was shot dead by an assassin, as he was entering the lobby of the House of Commons.

will be distressed at hearing of poor General Bowes's fate. It seems to have been decreed that he should die well, and no sooner had he escaped one breach than his fortune led him to that in which he fell. Although we expect to claim a large share of interest among you at this moment, we are aware that we are dividing it with others of our friends at a distance. Soult is advancing with 25,000 men upon General Hill, who is waiting for him in the position of Albuera, and it is likely that the blow will be struck on both sides the Tagus nearly at the same moment. On our side, I can assure you, we shall have the hearts of a whole people fighting with us. Nothing can exceed the enthusiasm with which we have been received in Salamanca, or the confidence with which they look forward to the approaching contest. Some skirmishing has taken place since their armies have been in presence, but nothing important.'

'Fuente La Peña: June 30, 1812.

'The forts in the town of Salamanca fell into our hands, I think, the day after I closed my last letter to you; and the French army was in motion the following morning in the direction of Toro and Valladolid. We began our march yesterday, and are now within five leagues of Toro, and eleven of Valladolid. The order is not yet given for the movement of to-morrow, but it is likely, I think, that it will be in the direction of the latter. The French army will post itself behind the Douro, from which situation I dare say we shall find means to dislodge it. The people of the country receive us with enthusiasm as we advance. We arrive in a happy hour.

'The harvest is ripening fast, and part of it getting in, while I am writing, in this neighbourhood. Some advantage has been gained over Bonnet in the north, and Soult has retired from before Albuera, followed by General Hill.

'If we were not setting out with such prospects I should regret leaving Salamanca in such a hurry, for the people make themselves very agreeable.'

'Torrecilla di Medina: July 7, 1812.

'Since I wrote to you last Marmont has crossed the Douro, and we are preparing to do the same thing; however as the French keep the opposite bank and beset the fords and bridges, some arrangement is necessary; but I believe all will be ready for the passage of the river immediately. The country we are now making war in is of as different a character from that we have for some time past been accustomed to, as the mode of warfare we are carrying on is new. It is a rich, luxuriant country, covered with corn, and immediately in this neighbourhood producing a quantity of excellent wine. But the whole of Castile may be called a perfect plain, in common language; very elevated, but scarcely a tree to be seen, and water by no means in plenty. The villages are numerous and large; but an army situated as ours is at this moment must not inhabit them merely as a measure of convenience, so that our troops are exposed to as much sun and dew as chooses to light on them. They are, however, healthy, and do not appear to suffer as much as the doctors seem to think they ought from such exposure. Among our officers the sandiness of the soil and constant glare are the means of bringing a number of green shades into play. I have had no temptation hitherto to have recourse to any such stratagem, nor do I see the most distant prospect of such a necessity. If there is any one thing that I have to tell you at this moment in the shape of ill news that I regret more than all I could think of besides, it is that General Graham is no longer among us. I went the other evening to Medina to take my leave of him, and he is now on his way to Oporto, where he intends to embark for England. For some time past his eyes have been seriously affected (not, however, I am afraid, in the way which I have just been describing), and the mischief has been so much increased by the interest he could not help taking in all that has been going on lately, that it is feared not all the skill of our countrymen will be sufficient to restore them. One of them he is prepared to lose certainly. The

decline of such a man has something in it that makes one very thoughtful.

'I hope I shall soon have to give you an account of our operations beyond the Douro. I do not think the passage of the river will be attended with much difficulty. I am anxious to take a more deliberate view of Valladolid than it was well in my power to take when I made my excursion there some seasons ago, which you may recollect my having described to you in some of my lucid intervals at Portsmouth. We have now in our neighbourhood what has been a very fine town, and there are few that I have ever seen bearing the traces of departed splendour more than Medina del Campo. It is famous for having been the seat of one of the largest fairs in Europe in the days of Charles V., and I believe later. But now what was a parish is represented by the ruins of its church, and so forth.

'I must add that whatever means you employ to send me my letters, they are the very best possible. I can hear of no one besides Lord Wellington and myself who have anything to say to the last packet yet. Adieu.'

'Nova de Setraval: July 25, 1812.

'The battle of Salamanca has at length been fought, and glorious indeed has been the result. When I wrote to you last I believe Marmont had commenced his retreat to the Douro, after the fall of the forts. He conducted it ably, crossing the river at Toro and Tordesvillas, and we passed many a tedious day observing him from the left bank, but evidently without any fixed intention of forcing the passage. At length he had collected reinforcements enough to induce him to resume the offensive, and he crossed the river by an able manœuvre, threatening our right flank, but still avoiding a battle, which was constantly offered on our part; forcing us, by this means, to conform to his movement, and to recross the Tormes on the 21st, in order to cover Salamanca, which was a scene of distress I have never seen equalled; considering itself already in the hands of the French, and preparing to pay the forfeit of all these rejoicings

which they had manifested with so little reserve since their deliverance out of the hands of the French. Still, they began to recover from their alarms, when on the morning of the 22nd they saw the French columns forming, evidently for the purpose of attack; and our own line steadily preparing to receive them. Not a soul ever doubted the issue of the contest, could a battle be brought on; but it was feared, that if Marmont continued to pursue the policy he had observed hitherto, he might force us to withdraw from Salamanca, and lay it open, at least, to insult, if not to permanent possession of the French. By mid-day, however, it appeared evident that he was meditating an attack upon us, and the expression was common in the mouth of every one, "At length Marmont is going to give us what we could hardly have forced from him." His columns were in motion on all sides, and his formidable artillery gradually placed in position. He had, unquestionably, the advantage of the ground; and for three hours before any movement of attack took place, our line was subject to the heaviest cannonade I have ever been exposed to. Still, he showed no disposition to bring his troops into action; and it seemed as if he meant to content himself with the advantages he derived from the superiority of his cannonade; and hoped to remove us by its effect, before he risked his infantry. But Lord Wellington's plans were completed; he was never greater than on this day.[1] Like the Prince of Condé, he is certainly greatest on the day of battle. At three o'clock in the afternoon, he ordered the line to advance and attack the French position. Had an army risen from the ground to attack them, I cannot conceive their surprise to have been greater. We had declined acting on the offensive on so many more tempting occasions than the present one, that it was evident they considered the moment and mode of attack depended upon themselves.

'Never, I believe, was success anticipated to the degree

[1] Napier says: 'Waterloo may be called a more glorious exploit, because of the great man who was there vanquished; Assaye may be deemed a more wonderful action; but Salamanca will always be referred to as the most skilful of Wellington's battles.

that it was in the English army when the advance was ordered. Had an indifferent person (if such a one could be found) come among us at this moment, while the French were continuing the heaviest of their cannonade upon us, and observed our soldiers preparing for the advance, he would have said, "Whatever these men are going to attempt, they *must* succeed." The scene too was, of all others, the most animating. The country was such that the fifty thousand men of either army could move in all directions, and from many points be in view almost at the same moment. Salamanca, which, till this moment, had considered itself sacrificed by the incautiousness of its conduct towards us, its supposed deliverers, was three miles off, in full view of both armies; and it overlooked us into the French position, which was more elevated than ours. The advance was, as Tasso describes it on another occasion: '*Rapido si, ma rapido con legge*,' under the destructive fire of the French artillery, which grew more deadly as we approached it. But the spirit of our people rose in proportion, and when they reached the enemy's solid columns, which opened a fire like a volcano upon them, there was not a moment's hesitation; no check along the whole line, but a general shout of exultation was echoed from all quarters. The enemy wavered, retired from height to height; till at length it was impossible to withstand the ardour of our soldiers, which seemed to increase with every fresh assault, and complete rout ensued. As for General Leith, he addressed the troops with the eloquence of a Cæsar, before they advanced; and he led them, like something that had descended for a time to favour the righteous side; and had this even been so, the enthusiasm excited could hardly have been greater. We should have been too happy had he escaped altogether; but after the most important advantage had been gained, he received a musket-shot in the arm, which shattered the bone; and when he grew faint with loss of blood, I tied up his arm as well as I could, and sent him in good hands to the rear. He is since gone into Salamanca, and I rejoice to learn that there is every prospect at present of saving his arm. I am fond enough to look forward to the moment of his again

heading us. I have told you on other occasions that if I had any faith in sorcery I should incline to think that I bear a charmed life. But I do not thank Heaven with half so much fervour for having suffered me to pass without injury through this day, as for having suffered me to bear a part in more than one of the most important of this day's feats. I believe the division will be well spoken of. Lord Wellington followed it with his eye from the moment of its advance till the crisis was over, and then went elsewhere. I have only detailed to you what happened among ourselves; on other sides the success was equally brilliant, and the rout complete.[1] The loss of the French is computed at present at twelve thousand in killed and wounded, nineteen pieces of cannon, besides eagles and other trophies, and their army is in complete rout at this moment. The pursuit will continue to-morrow. Who shall calculate the consequences of this great battle?

'Tell Henry I have received the things he sent me quite safe, and they are exactly what I wanted. I am hurried now, but shall write to you again soon. Best love to aunt and Goully. I know how anxious they will be to hear from me. Le Blanc and Dallas are well. I have treated you to a double letter this time, but I thought the occasion deserved that. I write as intelligibly as I am able.'[2]

'Camp on the Cega, two leagues from Valladolid: July 31, 1812.

'Although I have every hope that this will not be the first account you will receive from me since our proceedings before Salamanca—and little has occurred since this period that will be interesting to you to learn—it is, however, a subject that we are all fond of hearing ourselves talk upon, and are unreasonable enough to expect that a repetition of the story will amuse our friends as everlastingly as ourselves. Something new, however, I think I can tell you; at least, I can give you

[1] The French had 44,000 men engaged, and lost 14,000 killed, wounded, and prisoners. The loss of the allies was 5,200, of whom 3,176 were English.

[2] In after life Sir William Gomm always said 'Salamanca was the prettiest battle that ever was fought. The fifth division won it; we turned the left flank of the French under a hail of grape and canister.'

a gratifying piece of intelligence, with more confidence than I could have done in my letter written on the other side of Peñaranda. General Leith is surpassing our most sanguine expectations in the promise he is giving of a speedy recovery. The bone is fortunately not injured, and there is every reason to hope that he will experience neither stiffness nor other inconvenience from the wound after it is once healed. At head-quarters they are full of his praises; he was the Bayard or Gaston de Foix of this battle, "the observed of all observers;" he threw a truly chivalrous spirit into all those who were about him. The wits say that while he was advancing he looked like the presiding spirit of this tempest; his division the thunder-cloud that he rolled after him; and his staff were flashes of lightning that he scattered about him. I believe I have told you before that I ride a little horse they call "Phantom," from the activity with which it flits about; although, on common occasions, more, I think, in the style of Jack o' Lantern than a flash of lightning; and on this occasion I certainly gave him his head pretty liberally. We are longing all of us to hear from you in return for the details we have just sent home. I shall grow thin if we are not kept in perpetual motion till that time. The action of the body is certainly a relief to a restless mind.

'We have been taking many prisoners since I wrote to you last; and it is generally supposed that the French loss owing to this battle amounts nearly to twenty thousand men. Lord Wellington was yesterday in Valladolid. The remains of Marmont's army are marching upon Aranda, where it is supposed they expect to give the meeting to Joseph Bonaparte, with a force from Madrid. I think it probable we shall be of the party. We march at three to-morrow morning, I believe, in that direction. Joseph will clear our way to Madrid, if he waits for us, depend upon it. I want to write a great many letters, but, kept so constantly moving as we are, I fear it will be long before I shall accomplish my purpose.'

CHAPTER XIII.

1812.

ENTRY INTO MADRID—ENTHUSIASTIC RECEPTION—LIEUTENANT-COLONEL FOR SALAMANCA—BURGOS—UNSUCCESSFUL SIEGE—TERRIBLE RETREAT—NEARLY DROWNED—DEATH OF HIS GRANDFATHER—LAMEGO—SURVEYING IN TRAS-OS-MONTES—ADVANCE OF THE ARMY OVER DOURO TO VITTORIA.

'Madrid: August 14, 1812.

'ASK Goully whether I have not fulfilled, like a true knight, the vow I made to her some time since.

'Immediately after I wrote to you from the neighbourhood of Valladolid, the army marched upon Segovia and St. Ildefonso, crossed the mountains by the Guadarrama and Navacerrada passes, and on the 12th (the Prince's birthday) Lord Wellington entered Madrid. Yesterday the whole army arrived in the neighbourhood, and to-day we are investing the Retiro, which the French have strengthened, and occupied in the same manner as was done by the convent at Salamanca. If I live a thousand years I shall never pass such another day as yesterday, so full of delirium that the only assurance I have this morning that it was not all a dream, is that every one I meet has dreamed the same dream with myself; and I then dispose myself to believe that all was real. God forbid that anything which passed yesterday should lose its title to reality, or that the constitution so solemnly proclaimed, so enthusiastically received, should ever sink again into a mere name. I am afraid this will be a mad epistle, but I must write to you, and if I write nonsense do not be alarmed; I shall probably be better when I write again. If the brain was heated to ecstasy yesterday, it is pardonable that it should be a little unnerved to-day; it will recover its equilibrium by degrees;

but yesterday was too much for one not indifferent to what greatly concerns a generous people. I believe Goully knows Madrid; ask her, then, what effect she thinks likely to have been produced upon one entering Madrid for the first time, loving the Spaniards as I do, glorying in their cause as I do, at the very hour when the constitution was proclaiming with a pomp worthy the occasion; and every loving soul in Madrid cried, in the madness of their joy, "God save King Ferdinand!" "Glory to the English nation!" and saluting the English as they entered the town with the fondness of idolatry. I do not know who was profane enough to preserve his composure throughout this ceremony, but I am sure that a great many of us stood much in need of such a friend as the Roman general used to carry about with him during his triumph, and who repeated every five minutes the wholesome admonition, "Remember thou art a man." Madrid is a beautiful town; we all think we have seen nothing so finely connected in its buildings, so uniformly good, anywhere. Magic seems to have had a hand in providing it with at least half its population; but I will give you a better description of it when I am more sober, and have seen more. The attention we are obliged to give to this Retiro at such a moment is extremely annoying. It is not of sufficient importance as a military object to counterbalance, in our own estimation at least, the privations it occasions us. We are now encamped about a mile and a half from the town, having the Retiro between us and it.

'Our late rambles have been such as an amateur who came for the sole purpose of seeing the country would have chosen to follow, step for step. From Valladolid we visited the fine town of Segovia; the Palace, magnificent, I must call it, of San Ildefonso; the Guadarrama Mountains; the Escurial, Madrid. How shall I trace out the future? Aranjuez, Toledo; I should be sorry to fix a boundary to the amateur's exploits, yet my pencil is not bold enough to trace out for him further at this moment. A piece of singular good fortune, and in which the amateur is generally more favoured than we are who make a military excursion, has been that we have had time allowed us

to give to each of these objects the attention they merit; unless I must except San Ildefonso, for I should like to live there. But we have the advantage over all the amateurs who have ever gone before us, or perhaps of all who will ever follow us, in a visit to these places, in that we have had the satisfaction of driving before us as we entered them a band of detestable fellows, with the king of them at their head; and this circumstance has given us an additional pleasure in beholding them, similar to that which one feels in beholding a beautiful and valuable possession of one's own. The poor fugitive king (for I believe he is not a bad man) marched from Madrid in the direction of Aranjuez with a few French and several thousand Spaniards, who, if truly reported of, are at this moment more false to him than they have hitherto been to their country. I hope I shall soon have to tell you of a Spanish army raised in Madrid, in which the double obligation of patriotism and loyalty will have a common object, not frightfully at variance, as among the tribe I have just been talking of.

If I get into Madrid with this abominable Retiro out of the way, there is no knowing how far I may transgress myself against the law of correspondence between you and me, and I shall therefore, in the true spirit of policy, refrain from passing any censure for what appears to me your long silence. Tell Goully I shall begin making fresh tours when I can trust myself; I should deserve to have my wings clipped for such as I should make now, if I made any. There are not many Madrids, or I should write with more consideration both for you and myself; for writing paper has been very scarce among us, and I learned the consequences that will result to you from my extravagance in this particular.

'One o'clock. The Retiro has this moment surrendered, and I am going into Madrid. Adieu.'

Lord Wellington, in his despatch to Lord Bathurst of the same day, says:—

'The army moved forward yesterday morning, and its left took possession of the city of Madrid, the king having

retired with the Army of the Centre by the roads of Toledo and Aranjuez, leaving a garrison in the Retiro.

'It is impossible to describe the joy manifested by the inhabitants of Madrid upon our arrival, and I hope that the prevalence of the same sentiments of detestation of the French yoke, and of the strong desire to secure the independence of their country, which first induced them to set the example of resistance to the usurper, will induce them again to make exertions in the cause of their country, which, being more wisely directed, will be more efficacious than those formerly made.

'The heavy guns with which we took Salamanca are in the rear of the army, and I hope we shall not find it difficult to take the Retiro, but I believe that we must break ground before the place.'

On the following day, August 15, 1812, Lord Wellington wrote announcing that the garrison of the Retiro surrendered by capitulation yesterday. He says:—

'We invested the place completely on the evening of the 13th; and the troops were preparing to attack the works preparatory to the arrangements to be adopted for the attack of the interior lines and building, when the governor sent out an officer to desire to capitulate, and I granted him the honours of war—the baggage of the officers and soldiers of the garrison, etc.—as specified in the agreement.'

There were found in the Retiro 189 pieces of brass ordnance in excellent condition, 900 barrels of powder, 20,000 stand of arms, and considerable magazines of clothing, and provisions, and ammunition. The eagles of the 13th and 51st Regiments, which were also found there, were sent by Lord Wellington to H.R.H. the Prince Regent.

'The Escurial: August 21, 1812.

'. . . They have taken care for the present that Madrid shall not be our Capua, and have quartered four divisions of

us in and about this very large house; two divisions still continue in the neighbourhood of Madrid. We expect to remain in this situation a few days longer; there is no chance of our repose being disturbed. The French are making some trifling movements in the North: the king is marching towards Valencia. I shall tell you more of our movements or amusements when I write again.'

On August 17 Gomm was promoted to be a lieutenant-colonel.

'Quintana del Puente near Palenzuela: September 13, 1812.

'Need I tell you that the circumstance most gratifying to me attending my late promotion has been the sensation it has excited among my friends, and that their expressions of this feeling is to me the most valuable trophy I could have derived from these late adventures. Tell Goully I would not exchange her laurel leaf for all the gilded boughs that are to be purchased between Cintra and the Pyrenees; and assure my cousin[1] that no letter could give me half the delight his has given me, for I believe him to be the most excellent man in the world, and I value his benediction more than if it fell from the richest mitre in Christendom.

'I assure you, my dear Sophia, your letter brought me the first tidings of the particular mention made of me by Lord Wellington to the Duke of York. I was not altogether unprepared for the step of promotion, because Lord Wellington has already shown me many marks of favour; and on every public occasion General Leith, with the liberality natural to him, has given me the whole weight of his influence; but I did not expect that on a day when the spirit of chivalry seemed to animate all ranks, anything that it fell to my lot to take part in should have been attended by so enviable a distinction.

'Indeed, Lord Wellington is sadly in advance with me; and, believe me, I am conscientious enough to feel sensibly the magnitude of the debt I owe, but I will discharge it by the

[1] Rev. William Gomm of Bramdean.

best exertions I am capable of; and it is in my power at least to show that I acknowledge the debt.

'You know "Homer" was the book I learnt to spell from, and I do not recollect any part of his precepts that I have subscribed so heartily to from the moment I understood them as those contained in Sarpedon's speech to his friend Glaucus (I think in the 12th "Iliad") beginning with, "Why boast we, Glaucus, our extended reign?"

'A man who has just given the go-by to a few hundred majors had better adopt these sentiments with all expedition if he means to be borne with at all. My friends are all too kind to me; and if I were not well on my guard against Lady Malmesbury and some others, I should be tempted to think that what I have just obtained is in recompense for something done rather than a pledge for something to be done. . . . It is beautifully told of Epaminondas that he declared half the pleasure he derived from his victory at Leuctra was in the reflection that the news of it would delight his aged mother. And I can understand something of this feeling from the satisfaction I myself experience in the consciousness that my fortunes are interesting to so many venerable and respected friends.

'I had a letter from Godwin at the same time that your second batch of congratulations reached me; I rejoice that I had written to him some days before this; I told him I hoped soon to hear from you that you and he were great cronies. I hear his wife is delightful.

'My military news is very little. I think I wrote last from the Escurial. We have since driven the remains of Marmont's army through Valladolid, and are now within ten leagues of Burgos, which we shall presently take. We are waiting for 12,000 Spaniards who are in the neighbourhood, and who will co-operate with us. We are uncertain about Soult's movements; he will either retire the whole French army behind the Ebro, or fight us in a general battle near Madrid.'

'Burgos: September 21, 1812.

'I prepared you in my last letter for an attack upon the castle of this place. We are now busily employed in it.

'The night before last the principal outwork was carried by assault, and our whole attention is now directed against the body of the castle. It is strong, and I believe sufficiently garrisoned with a powerful artillery. The 1st Division only are employed at present in the business of the siege. The remainder of the army are in observation and investing the town. The French army have withdrawn to the Ebro, in the direction of Vittoria. This is the state of affairs in our neighbourhood. Soult appears also to be directing his march towards the Ebro. The raising of the siege of Cadiz and capture of Seville, alone are important circumstances.

'General Leith, I hope, is doing well, but he is gone to Lisbon, and I fear we shall not see him with the army for some time. I regret it exceedingly, for I value his single presence at 10,000 men in any field. In the meantime, we are commanded by a man who is liked by all the world in private life, and respected by no one in public. Adieu.'

'Hurones: October 9, 1812.

'I have written a long story since we came before Burgos, and I dare say it may have helped to explain to you how we are situated before this reaches you. I cannot give you a very favourable account of our proceedings hitherto. Our loss is considerable; and if we succeed in the end, it will be because we do not intend to fail in anything we undertake, for I cannot help thinking we have set to work idly, and without half the means we might have commanded. Begging my Lord Wellington's pardon, I think we have not respected the castle of Burgos sufficiently.[1] The 1st and 6th Divisions and

[1] The correctness of this view is indisputable; for after five assaults, the English army were obliged, on October 21, to relinquish the siege of Burgos, which had been so ably and successfully defended by the dauntless General Du Breton. It was after the last and again unsuccessful assault that Lord Wellington wrote to Brigadier-General Pack: 'I am sorry to say that I am afraid that I shall be obliged to give up our position here. As soon as you shall receive this letter

some Portuguese brigades are the only troops employed in the siege. The 5th and 7th Divisions have remained in position on the Vittoria road. The French army have received some reinforcements, and seem to be inclining to our right. There are reports that Massena has resumed the command. The weather is breaking, and the troops have been very sickly, but they are less so at present. The country about Burgos is naked, bleak, and ugly; the villages poor, and suffering much from the French; the town itself large, but not handsome. I have seen nothing worth remarking in it but the very ancient cathedral and the tomb of the Cid and Chimène.

'The Cid was born in this neighbourhood, and his remains are preserved in a monastery at Lardena, a league from Burgos, where a handsome monument was raised to his memory by Philip V.

'When the French began their depredations in Spain, the convent was destroyed; but General Thiebault, then Governor of Burgos, respecting the memory of the Cid, conveyed his ashes and all that had been done in honour of him to the town, and the monument now stands in a conspicuous situation close to the public walks, and everyone goes to look at it.

'We hear the Arch Sorcerer has beaten the Russians through Moscow, after a great battle. We expect a mail

you should send off the baggage, and then march with the troops under your command.'

The original order from the Quartermaster-General, dated that same day, is amongst Sir William Gomm's papers. It is as follows:—

'The 5th Division and their guns are to march by their left this evening as soon as it becomes so dark that the movements cannot be seen by the enemy. The above mentioned troops are to proceed by Quintana Dueñas to Villalon—thence by Badajos across the Urbal river, where they are to halt. Lieutenant-Colonel Gomm is to conduct the column. The two Spanish divisions to follow the 5th Division with their artillery.

'Lieutenant-Colonel Gomm to place the above troops in column of battalions as soon as they arrive on their ground; he will take care that these orders are duly communicated to the Spanish division. Care must be taken to make fires previously to their march. (Signed) J. H. Gordon, Q.M.G.'

It was then that began the disastrous retreat to the Portuguese frontier, in which the loss of the Allies is put down at 9,000, with a large quantity of baggage. This disaster raised a loud cry of dissatisfaction in England against the army and its generals, in which the previous successes and victories were forgotten.

hourly, which I trust will set us at ease about this report. We have received the English accounts of our entering Madrid.

'Sir Howard Douglas has just left us, proposing, I believe, to return to England immediately. He grew tired of his Corunna mission, and has been at headquarters for some time. I hardly know what he would be at, but he is certainly shut out for the present from the situations he seems desirous of filling. He has certainly a great deal of talent, science, and activity of mind, and a considerable share of ambition; but I do not think he will ever shine in public life, political or military.'

'Camp opposite Tordesilla: November 1, 1812.

'Since I last wrote to you a great deal has happened that I should have been glad to have given you an earlier account of, but I have scarcely time now to do more than account to you for our being here. The inadequacy of the means with which we attacked the castle of Burgos allowed the French armies of the north, time to assemble and reorganise a sufficient force to induce them to assume the offensive.

'In consequence, the siege was raised on the night of the 21st, and the retreat upon Valladolid commenced. We have had some fatiguing marches, and bad weather. Yesterday the whole army assembled here. The French are manœuvring on the right bank of the Douro, which is very much swollen with the rains. In the meantime, General Hill has been crossing the Guadiana, and I believe is this day at Arevalo; Soult, therefore, in Madrid some days since! The Gazette will make you acquainted with the particulars of a heavy day the 5th Division passed at the Bridge of Villa Muriel on the 25th. We lost nearly 600 men, but did, I believe, all that was expected of us. Poor Madrid! I tremble for the next accounts from this quarter. I have not strength of mind nor temper enough to look calmly into the strong military reasons, which undoubtedly exist, for our making this great sacrifice; and he is possessed of an enviable command over himself, and a short memory, who does not feel this necessary desertion of

Madrid as something nearly approaching to a heavy domestic misfortune.

'Madrid deserves a better fate.

'I am not merry to-day, and I dare say you will perceive it; I shall not drawl on any longer.

'I trust that a great battle will shortly set matters to rights among us.'

'Ituero: November 22, 1812.

'When I last wrote to you from Salamanca, the French army were crossing the Tormes, and I told you we were preparing to make a corresponding movement. We crossed the river immediately, and continued our march towards Rodrigo. The weather, which had favoured us since we left Burgos, and particularly while we were in position before Salamanca, now took a decided turn, and during the last five days of our march the rain fell in torrents; so that we waded with difficulty through rivers where scarcely the trace of a watercourse was observable when we came up the country. Our retreat has been all along more a measure of policy than of necessity, and it wore this appearance till we left Salamanca. The army was halted and the enemy offered battle as often as it was found necessary to rest the troops. But during the last few days it revived many recollections of the dreadful race to Corunna.

'In some respects the hardships were greater, for on that occasion the troops were generally under cover, such as it was, during the night; but here the only resting-place, after a day spent as I have just described, was a bleak, swampy plain, with more temptation in it to watch than sleep, and to look out with impatience for the break of the following morning. I am perfectly well, but I have seldom been more harassed than during this period, although my share has been small in comparison with that of many others. Lord Wellington's has been the greatest, although he did not sleep out at nights. I have seen something of him during these proceedings, and more to admire in him than ever. His temper, naturally hasty, seemed to grow more calm as that of the weather rose, but it

was a calmness that indicated elevation rather than depression of spirit. He is eminently gifted with all sorts of great qualities. His retreat has been masterly; he has withdrawn the army upwards, I believe, of 200 miles, the greater part of the time before a superior force, which has never once found him in a situation to attempt anything serious, except upon the Carrion, where they failed; and he has reached the point upon which, from the beginning, he directed himself, with his army unbroken, except by the elements and their own indiscipline. Lord Wellington is so truly great that any attempt to palliate or conceal what appears to a common observer a military error or weakness, is a tenderness that he may readily dispense with; and I hope his biographer will deal more justly, both with the world and himself. In the meantime I will say, that from the moment the siege of Burgos Castle was seriously undertaken it has always appeared to me that there was more of fondness than firmness, or even obstinacy, in the conduct of an enterprise which all the world saw (and it is absurd to suppose that he himself did not see) was entered upon with means inadequate, and carried on, certainly, many days after the success of it was more than doubtful. Yet he who comments upon these proceedings will do well, in my mind, should he censure, as Lord Chesterfield does, after drawing a picture of Lord Bolingbroke: "When we contemplate this subject, what is it that we can say but, alas, poor human nature!"—to censure less generally, would be to treat his subject lightly.

'Once more I am surprised in the middle of my letter by receiving one from you: it is of October 19, and makes me most happy in the accounts it brings me of Henry. The Count's news, public and private, gives me great satisfaction. If the Russians continue where they are we shall be in Madrid in the early spring. At present our quarters are not very sumptuous, but I believe it is the intention to send us, in the course of a few days, into the valley of the Mondego.'

Gomm's letters during that most trying and disastrous retreat were, of course, very few and far between; nor was it his rôle ever to harass the feelings of his aunt and sister with

any unnecessary dwelling upon the inevitable horrors of war, which are seen at their very worst during a retreat; and certainly the histories of the war assure us that no one of these horrors was wanting on the occasion of the retreat from Burgos. All is, however, lightly and uncomplainingly passed over by Gomm, though his share of the anxieties and fatigues could, considering his position, have been no mean one. In a memorandum written by him some years afterwards he says: 'Here be some scraps of reminiscence, more or less pugnacious, of years long gone by; but certainly the most nervous passage of the whole series of so-called adventure brought to mind remains yet unchronicled, viz., the conducting by the writer in his capacity of assistant quartermaster-general of two divisions of the army by fords across the Arlanzon river, the road to them lying midway between the castle of Burgos—the siege of which we were secretly abandoning by night—and the relieving French army, whose camp fires were in view, and over some miles of waste country, trackless, save by private landmarks of his own previous establishing. Colonel Pringle, the worthy commandant of the large force committed to his safe keeping, frequently rode up and assailed him with the question, "Now, Gomm, are you sure you are right?" to which he received for answer, "So far, sir, I believe I am; but I am pretty sure I shall lead you all wrong presently, if not let alone." The anxious night resulted in the column being led neither into the French lines on the right nor up to the castle walls, but simply to the ford so eagerly sought for, as light strengthened. The precaution had been taken of muffling the gun-carriage wheels in straw; and it was not till later, when the galloping of some guerilla horsemen attracted notice, that the French opened a heavy fire upon their retreating foe. The quartermaster-general's department throughout this great war had duties of a very high and grave order thrust upon it, with proportionate responsibility, of which the above little narrative furnishes a sample.'

It was during this terrible retreat that Gomm had another

of his hairbreadth escapes, but this time the enemy at whose hands he suffered was not the French army, but a river in flood. Amongst his papers is an old, stained, folded Spanish map, on to which is pinned a memorandum, written by him in later years: 'This crumpled morsel of map was all but drowned with me in the Duero while treasuring my sabretache in wear, during my attempt to ford the river when at its height, preliminary to escorting my division of the army over it when marching upon Valladolid in 1812. I missed the ford, and my horse, aided by the element, summarily decanting me from its saddle in mid-stream, wisely fought his way back solus to the shore just left, the violence of the current hurrying me the while to that opposite; and there stood at gaze, ponderingly, till assistance came up and reunited us. The ford was a sufficient one, but zigzaggy, or rather curvilineal, ill to be traversed unattended by local pilotage, and none such was at hand on this memorable occasion.'

In another memorandum on the subject he says: 'The division had scarcely halted on the high ground close to Boecillo, when an officer despatched by Colonel Gordon gave me notice that I was required to attend immediately at a large house he pointed out to receive orders for the division. I made all expedition to the point, and received orders, written by myself in pencil and signed by Colonel Gordon, which were to be carried into effect immediately upon my return to the division; but he desired me before I returned to go down to the ford to reconnoitre and pass it. It was then that my horse and I got separated in the manner described above. My horse was stopped by Capt. Gledstanes, and I from the other bank explained to him the substance of the now washed-out written order, and urged him to make all haste back to my column, which, until his arrival, would remain in perfect ignorance of the movement intended. An officer of Colonel Ponsonby's brigade afterwards came down to the ford, which by that time I had examined, and I directed him where to cross: he did so, and brought my horse with him. I then made all speed back

to my division, which I found in movement. I explained to General Pringle particularly how it was that I could not deliver the written order, and he was kind enough to say that he understood the order as I had delivered it; and on Lord Wellington subsequently sending for me to know what had caused the delay of the advance of the column, I explained the above circumstances to him.'

Had Captain Gledstanes not come up just at the time, some serious mishap might have arisen from this adventure, for on the order he was bringing depended the movement of the whole division.

'Lamego: December 28, 1812.

'Our march from the neighbourhood of Rodrigo, and employment some days after our arrival here in settling the troops in their cantonments, may help to account for my unusually long silence.

'The army will most probably continue in quarters for a couple of months longer.

'We are at present in very good quarters, and close to our stores, so that it is presumed we shall grow fat. There are some pleasant families in the town and neighbourhood, who pay us attention enough to make us also grow saucy. I shall endeavour to get a glimpse of Oporto before we leave this part of the world. I hope you have all been enjoying yourselves lately, as we have been doing, and still continue to do here: ours is a long, but not therefore tedious Christmas. The weather, which has been till lately all rain, has changed into frost, and promises a continuance. I dare say you are all anxious to hear what Lord Wellington's visit to Cadiz will produce. We are equally anxious for a confirmation of all the good reports we have from England on Russian affairs, and more good reports.'

'Lamego: March 14, 1813.

'My Dear Aunt,—I received several days ago your letter, bringing me an account of my grandfather's death. Though circumstances have never permitted me to know him

whom I addressed by that title, still the name Grandfather is so intimately blended with sacred recollections, and confers such a distinction upon whomsoever it belongs to, that I do not learn the account of his death without much concern, and a feeling of regret that I should never have known him.

'All that you have done in consequence of this event I should offer you my thanks for, if you had not spoiled me long ago, and taught me to look upon all you do whenever the occasion offers, as belonging to the class of good offices we are in the common course of things to expect from an aunt; and it is not till I have made the rest of the world pass in judgment that I find out that I have either been raising my standard of merit imperceptibly, or the world has been falling off in worth, which I am not inclined to believe.

'I understand perfectly your *exposé* of the state of my affairs, and am fully satisfied that what you have been doing is the best that could have been done in such a case. If you have occasion to communicate again with Mr. Jordan, pray thank him for the attention he has given to my business; but I wish you would particularly express to Mrs. Southwell how sensible I am to the interest and friendship with which she has taken my part in that quarter.

'With regard to the slaves, I do not understand much about the business. Wisdom cures us of a legion of false delicacies, and if I followed my taste in this matter I should very likely seem what is called romantic, which is not reputable nowadays. In fact, I know so little about the matter that I might be doing much harm where I intended to do most good, which would be silly enough; so that things had better go on as usual in these cases.

'The army will move, I should think, in less than a month.

'I have not heard from Henry for some days, but I shall provoke him immediately.

'I long to hear from Sophia or yourself every day till something is settled about her. Adieu, my dear aunt. Best love to the girl and Goully.—Ever most affectionately yours,

'Wm. Gomm.'

To his Sister.

Lamego: April 11, 1813.

'I no sooner begin to repent me of having lost so many moments since my return from Oporto, which might have been employed in writing to you, than I receive an order from head-quarters to proceed immediately to the Tras-os-Montes, to reconnoitre a district of country through which it is probably intended part of the army should advance into Spain. I shall set out to-morrow, and expect to be employed about a fortnight on this tour. I am rather nervous about the weather. This is the first day of rain we have had for a long time, and I shall be agreeably surprised if it is not succeeded by a few more of the same complexion. One who is pondering upon the prospects of a mountainous journey must be forgiven if he should not seem very feelingly alive to the interests of a whole country when they clash so rudely with his own as in the present instance.

'I like Oporto much. I saw it at an unfavourable moment. There are few amusements going on during Lent. Englishmen like it better than other places because people conform more to their own habits there than elsewhere. You will all be happy to hear that Henry has a prospect of soon becoming eldest major of his regiment. I dare say, however, he has already told you this.

'I have Herries with me: the fates have lately come to a resolution (which I cannot too much applaud) of allotting a deputy to each quartermaster-general of a division; and he volunteered to come to mine, much to my satisfaction, for you know we are very old cronies.'

'Lamego: May 1, 1813.

'Your letter of April 3 reached me some days ago, while I was on my expedition. I, however, delayed answering it till my return to Lamego, not so much on account of the pressure of business, as that I thought my communication with Lisbon from hence would be more certain than from the quarter I was

then in. Touching my negligence in writing to you about the time you mention, I cannot help making an observation which never occurred to me before, but which will certainly go rather to strengthen your accusation than my defence; and it is, that my share of the correspondence which has subsisted between you and me this many a day has most unworthily arrogated to itself a prerogative which seems to belong exclusively to history —that of preserving a dead silence when there is no mischief to be told; for if it is true that history is little else than a catalogue of the vices and follies and the misfortunes of mankind, it is no less certain that my epistolary muse is most on the wing in turbulent times; and as there is a chasm in the history of the Assyrian monarchy of some six or seven hundred years, which nobody has hitherto been able to fill up—perhaps because that people enjoyed more happiness, or at least more tranquillity, during that than any former or after period—so it is that there is a gap of as many weeks in my story with you only because we had been lying so long idle at Lamego. I, however, was not idle during this period, although I am very sure my attention would often have been better directed had it been employed in answering your letters than in the business I was then upon.

'In the letter I wrote you just before I crossed the Douro I said I expected to be absent about a fortnight; I have, however, found employment for nearly three weeks. The weather was invariably fine till the last three days of my pilgrimage, during which the elements seem to have come to a resolution to drown me and my horses, but we always escaped with a ducking; so that far from finding my employment irksome, I enjoyed it; and it became so much the more interesting from the probability of my being shortly called upon to lead my flock in the same direction.

'The mountaineers are a kind people, and there are some "happy valleys" as unconnected with the great world, and almost as inaccessible, as that in which the "Father of Waters" begins his course, and that have not suffered so much alarm for many a day, as when I held out to them the prospect of my

being shortly forced to conduct a band of locusts over their possessions.

'I am talking to you about our preparations for a campaign, but the most turbulent spirit among us cannot desire anything more severe than that which you appear to be entering upon. You are right, my dear Sophia; I long heartily to come among you, but I feel it will not be till all is settled in this country. The army is fully equipped, and its losses repaired, and I think it is fully equal to its purpose. We shall probably have enough to do, but go some distance to seek it. Part of the army, including this division, will perhaps cross the Douro here, and march through the mountains upon Zamora and Valladolid. I shall like it, for the beaten path is rather a tedious one. We hear Sir James Leith is coming out immediately. I have not seen very late papers, but I understand he has had many compliments paid him, exclusive of the Ribbon. I am very happy it is so, for they cannot honour him too highly. We may say of him as Junius does of Lord Chatham: "It is a noble plant, and well able to support the honours which adorn it." I have written to Henry, and told him all you say about his step in the regiment: it gave me great pleasure to hear of it, for he now stands upon firm ground, come Peace when she will.

'I do not know how it may be with you, but this is not the flowering May morning with us that the poets are wont to hail so invitingly, but more like wizened November. The rain comes late; but the country requires it, and, as my journey is over, I join chorus in bidding it welcome.

'We have just received accounts from Valencia, stating that Suchet has made an unsuccessful attack upon General Murray, and been forced to retire with considerable loss, followed by the latter.

'I received a letter from Sir Howard in company with your last. I had written to him, thanking him for all he had done about Broughton: he is always very kind. Poor Lady Douglas is not well: she does not deserve such crossings as she has been subject to lately.'

'Lamego: May 13, 1813.

'We cross the Douro to-morrow, and proceed through Villa Real, Murçia, and Mirandela to the neighbourhood of Braganza, where we expect further instructions. The 1st Division follows us, and great part of the cavalry march upon our flank. It is pleasant to find one's labours turned to some account; and I believe this will be the case with my late reconnaissance, for I believe there will be no part of it that will not be acted upon. We shall border upon the impossible on several occasions before we reach the frontier, and I am in hopes I shall make my guns carry their point against the opinions of all the wise men of the province.

'I am glad we are moving, for I have had hard work to keep off the attacks of ague since I have been here. He may be a troublesome partisan, but no general, for he might have attacked me upon much better ground on other occasions—in Walcheren, for instance.

'The weather is favouring us. The rains have ceased for several days, and I am in hopes I shall find my mountain torrents dwindling fast into murmuring streams. We shall start the French from Salamanca by this movement, and, I should think, from all the country on this side Burgos.

'I have written to Henry, giving him an account of our movements. I have not had his answer yet. I should think he will belong to the column that marches by Rodrigo and Salamanca.

'I have just been interrupted by an officer, artilleryman by trade, who tells me, looking very significantly, that he is told the roads are very bad on the other side the water. These people are as nervous about their guns as the people they fire at are about their shot.

'Thank you for the present of tea you have sent me; it is very acceptable. You ask what you shall send me whenever an opportunity offers; but it would be whimsical in me to propose anything, for we are well supplied here with all the necessaries of life, and for the luxuries I had much rather wait and share them with you all one day.

'I shall write to you again when we are over the mountains, which will be about the 24th. Tell aunt I hope Fritz has by this time joined the Russians. She inquires about the Prince of Orange; nothing can be more kind than his behaviour whenever we meet. I have not mentioned him lately, not having been in the way of seeing him since the army came into quarters.

'Remember me to the Douglases when you meet with any of them; I shall not write to Sir Howard till we reach Braganza.'

'Outeiro: May 24, 1813.

'We reached this place yesterday, guns and all. My guns behaved very well, but their officers required more driving than their horses; and had I not been more interested than they in the success of the enterprise, there was, on more occasions than one, opposition enough to have turned an obstinate man from his opinion. The weather fought against us at the beginning, but it is now settled summer, and we shall fry for the next five months. We halt here to-day and to-morrow, and then make four days' march to Losilla, a place about a league on this side the Esla, and five from Zamora.

'There are a few thousand French beyond the Esla, and Zamora is garrisoned. We have four divisions of the army in this neighbourhood, and a large body of cavalry. A battering train will be with us directly. The French cannot hold Zamora long. Henry must certainly be with the Salamanca column. I have not heard from him very lately. I dare say his division had moved before my letter could have reached Rio Torto, in which I apprised him of our movements. I am expecting a letter from you.

'A mail has arrived, but we have not yet received half the letters that are due to us, although I dare say we shall get them before we leave this.

'I have had no time to devote to ague since I last wrote to you, and it has deserted me like sea-sickness after one reaches the shore.

'I shall ride over to Braganza to-morrow if there is nothing to do. I have rather a curiosity to see it.'

'Medina de Rio Seco: June 5, 1813.

'You see we have been walking through the country without interruption since I last wrote to you, and I think are likely to continue doing so till we reach the Ebro. The whole army is on this side the Duero, and, including the Spaniards, we are advancing with a force little short of a hundred thousand men. The French can oppose nothing like this to us until we reach the Ebro. You will have seen how much we were in the dark about the movements of the 7th Division when I last wrote. I had a visit from Henry the other day; he was encamped a few miles from us. He is very well, and growing fat for want of work. To-day he must be several leagues from us We compose part of the left column, under the immediate command of Sir Thomas Graham. Next to Lord Wellington's self, there is no one who will take so good care of us. He is looking remarkably well, and, although he has not quite recovered the use of his sight, there are no fears entertained of his suffering in this respect from fatigue. We shall move to-morrow in the direction of Valencia.

'I have just heard that Sir James Leith has landed at Lisbon, and means to join us immediately. I need not tell you it gives me great satisfaction. On the subject of snuff, tell aunt that it has nearly the same attraction for me that Falstaff describes rebellion to have had for Percy, "It lay in his way, and he found it;" but I should like to know how she found out that snuff had any charm for me.

'The people of this town have received us most graciously. For want of something else to do, we have been laying ourselves out a good deal for receiving the compliments of the season; and we find it such a favoured spot by nature, that it almost tempts one seriously to think the Spanish women grow handsomer every year.'

'Sotresgudo: June 12, 1813.

'The army halts to-day. Our column is within one day's march of the Ebro, the head-quarters at Castrojeriz. The 7th Division are too much to the right for Henry's convenience and mine. We have not met since I last wrote to you. We have had some bad weather since we left Rio Seco, and I am afraid we have not yet got rid of it. I hope you will admire in England the rapidity with which we have brought 80,000 men to the banks of the Ebro,[1] in the face of about as many French, somewhere to be found, they say, but we know as little where, I believe, at present, as they know of us. Certain it is, that this fine movement of Lord Wellington's has taken their plans as much aback as their positions, and I am expecting some brilliant result, shortly after we shall have effected the passage of the Ebro, in this part.

'I regret that our business has not led us as high up as Regnosa, for I have an idle piece of curiosity that I should like to indulge—that of visiting the sources of the Ebro. This fine river is said to be distinguished from all others in

[1] 'What will they say in England when the story there is told?' was the first thought then, as it ever is with our men when fighting their country's battles abroad. What they did say in England at the time was simply to record the fact of the advance of Lord Wellington's army and the retreat of the French, evidently not appreciating the value and excellence of what they recorded. What, a few years afterwards, was the opinion of the profoundest of military students and the ablest of war historians, is as follows:—'Let those who understand war say whether the English General's mastery of the line of the Douro was an effort worthy of the man and his army. Let them have all the combinations, follow the movement of Graham's columns, some of which marched 150, some more than 250 miles through the wild districts of Tras-os-Montes. Through those regions, held to be nearly impracticable for small corps, 40,000 men, infantry, cavalry, artillery, and pontoons had been carried and placed as if by a supernatural power upon the Esla, before the enemy knew even that they were in movement. Was it fortune or skill that presided? Not fortune, for the difficulties were such that Graham arrived later on the Esla than Wellington intended, and yet so soon that the enemy could take no advantage of the delay. Wellington had, as we have seen, prepared the means of outnumbering the king's army both upon the Douro and the Upper and Lower Eslas, and all these combinations, these surprising exertions, had been made merely to gain a fair field of battle.'—*Napier's Peninsular War*, vol. v., chap. vii.

this respect, that it does not rise imperceptibly, in many small streams, which, after running a certain course, unite, and take the name of a river; but that it is the Ebro from its beginning, gushing impetuously from several large cisterns in the mountains above Regnosa, and forming at once a mighty river. We have lately been marching through a flat, rich country, but very difficult to get through after much rain. We shall shortly get among the mountains, and make acquaintance with the younger branches of the Pyrenean family.

'I have had some slight attacks of ague since I crossed the Douro, but a change of bank never fails to repulse the fiend. These attacks, indeed, as I have called them, have been so slight, and have caused me so little inconvenience, that I should not have thought of noticing them in writing to you were I not fearful that aunt might discover I had ague fits, through the same channel that brought her the intelligence the other day of my being a snuffer of snuff!

'I am anxious to cross the Ebro, and to know something more than we do at present of the French positions. They seem to be quite unprepared to meet the force Lord Wellington has collected, and to meet it in the way in which he has disposed of it. The guerilla force, under Mina and Longa, will join us immediately, and I think Lord Wellington will have a disposable force little short of 150,000 men upon the Ebro.'

CHAPTER XIV.

1813.

BATTLE OF VITTORIA—BEFORE SAN SEBASTIAN—FAILURE OF ASSAULT—WANT OF ENGINEERING CARE—THE DESPATCH OF VITTORIA—BROTHER (LIEUTENANT-COLONEL HENRY GOMM) SEVERELY WOUNDED IN BATTLE OF PYRENEES—CAPTURE OF SAN SEBASTIAN—TOWN BURNT.

'Eredia, three leagues from Vittoria, on the Pamplona Road: June 22, 1813.

'I AM much afraid my letter will not arrive in time at head-quarters to keep pace with the despatches, but I could not make up my mind to write to you till I had heard something about Henry. We have not yet been able to meet, or to write to each other; but I have so many assurances of his safety, from those who were able to give me information, and I have so much reason to believe that the 6th were not engaged, or very slightly, that nothing but a direct assurance from himself that he is well could make me feel easier than I do on his account. Besides, I dare say he is writing to you himself.

'We attacked the French army yesterday upon the plain of Vittoria, and have beaten them soundly. The 5th Division have again had their full share of employment. We carried by storm the village of Gamarra Mayor, on the flank of the French army, and thereby cutting off their retreat by the Bayonne road.[1] It was a post of the utmost importance to the enemy, and they knew it; for they defended the village obstinately, and charged the bridge over the Zadora river repeatedly after we had taken possession of it. Our loss has, therefore, been severe, particularly from the 4th, 47th, 59th, and Royal regiments, which were the first that advanced upon the village; but judges say we have added to our

[1] See Lord Wellington's despatch of this date, extracts from which are given as a foot-note in page 313.

reputation, and we are given to understand that Lord Wellington thinks we performed a very important service at that moment. It seems to have been decisive of the enemy's plans, if he ever had any; for the left of his line, which had fought well during the whole day, was in full retreat shortly after we had established ourselves; and when we crossed the bridge the whole of the British cavalry covered the plain of Vittoria. I assure you 4,000 British helmets reflecting the rays of the setting sun across the plain was rather an animating spectacle under such circumstances. The French have left in our hands the whole of their baggage, stores of every description, military chests, and, by the most general report, eighty pieces of cannon upon the field Their policy on this occasion is not to be understood. There is no instance in history of an army retiring unbroken and making such sacrifices. Joseph Bonaparte rode off towards Pamplona in the course of the day. The whole of his baggage, private papers, cyphers, in fact whatever he possessed, is in our hands; and his servants say that all his possessions are upon his shoulders. I regret that I have not been able to go into Vittoria to-day. Those who have been there say that the variety of prizes offered for sale, general officers' carriages, horses, mules, baggage of every description, make up the strangest fair they ever attended. The loss of our army on this occasion in men will have been nearly as great as that of the enemy—I should think about 4,000, and, strange to tell, I believe we have not made 1,000 prisoners.

'Now that I have given you a general idea of the manner in which we employed our time yesterday, I must beg of you to excuse my enlarging a little upon my own private grievances in the course of it. I am likely to pay pretty handsomely for my day's amusement. I bought lately a beautiful English mare, which I rode yesterday in the field, and she was shot under me in the first assault of the village. She was so severely wounded in the shoulder by a musket-ball, that it was with difficulty I could make her carry me into the village. When we had gained some footing, I was upon the

point of putting a pistol to her head and shortening her sufferings, when a shell struck the ground within five yards of us, and, bursting, put an end to the ceremony, and set her at rest. I escaped, with my usual good fortune. My poor mare cost me a hundred guineas, and they will pay me five-and-thirty. However, believe me, I do not exclaim with the Knight of Snowdon, "Woe worth the chace, woe worth the day," for I think that even to a very poor man, as I very certainly am, there is no loss in point of money that can at all weigh against the luxury of riding a fine horse in action. I have still "The Phantom," in high preservation, and two others, that under my weight will suffer very few in the country to pass them.

'I must not forget to tell you that Dallas and Le Blanc are both well, in case you should see any of their friends before they hear from them. I know Dallas is a graceless youth, and I dare say not very communicative on these occasions.

'I have not written to you since we crossed the Ebro, for I have not had an opportunity. One of our brigades, General Hay's, had an affair the other day, at the Pass of Osma, with part of Mancune's division, in which I was also concerned; but I could not write to you at that time. We have had the weather of November ever since we crossed the Ebro, and it is likely to continue. "Neuf mois d'hiver, et trois de mauvais temps," seems to be the character of this climate as well as of our own. The country is beautiful; richly-cultivated valleys, and mountains covered with the noblest forests. Whoever hereafter threatens me with Switzerland shall hear of the Pass of Osma and the Valley of Santa Colomba. It does not appear that the French ever entered this valley, and perhaps until we passed through it (to use the expression of some writers) "the clang of arms had never disturbed its solemn repose." Indeed, I can conceive nothing finer than the whole route from the banks of the Upper Ebro across the mountains to Vittoria. The enemy never seem to have dreamed that a column of 18,000 men, which was the force of ours, was moving upon him in this direction. We have had harassing

and fatiguing marches, but the great combinations of Lord Wellington have been crowned with the happiest success.

'Everything we hear of the French since yesterday seems to render their conduct more and more inexplicable. The king was giving a concert when our attack commenced; they never seem to have imagined it possible that we could have forced their position.

'We have just heard that Lord Wellington thinks a hundred and thirty-seven pieces of cannon have fallen into our hands; if so, we have taken fifty pieces beyond the number we ourselves brought into the field.

'Lord Wellington has already written to General Oswald, expressing to him the high sense he has of the service rendered by the division. Sir Thomas Graham, also, under whose immediate command we acted, has said the handsomest things of us. Upon the whole, I think myself lucky in not having fallen a martyr to ague at Lamego. If I judge rightly, he is a champion that does not stand fire, for he has not attended me of late.

'The French have retired upon Pamplona; the army is in full march after them, the Hussars harassing their rear-guard. We are hourly expecting an order for to-morrow's movement.

'I had almost forgot mentioning to you that we had a good deal to do with Longa, the famous guerilla, yesterday. His people behaved well, and were of much service. He is himself a young man; and for one so full of enterprise, and so little used to control, I thought his behaviour admirable, in falling so readily as he did into our plans—sometimes very opposite to his own.

'I have nothing further to relate to you upon the subject, I believe, but that we found the longest day in the year too short for our purpose. I shall write to the General and to Sir Howard as soon as I can.'

'Mondragon: July 3, 1813.

'Since I last wrote to you, Joseph has withdrawn his army through the Pass of Roncesvalles into France, leaving a

garrison in Pamplona, which, I believe, will be besieged immediately. I do not think we shall have much to say to it. Sir T. Graham has driven Foy and his division across the Bidasoa river, so that the country is clear on this side. We have had a dance in the meanwhile after Clausel, who I believe has gone down to Zarragoza, and there joined Suchet. We are going to-morrow towards Tolosa, to rejoin Sir T. Graham.

'I am only retailing here what I have told the General in the long story enclosed, because I do not think you will venture upon the perusal of so long-winded a tale. I should send it to him direct if I were certain where I should find him. It is very provoking that Henry and I have never been able to clash since the action. He has been sent one way, and I another; but I have good accounts of him. I am myself very well.

'I did not know when I wrote to you that my poor little Phantom did not get off entirely without harm from the hurly-burly, although he escaped shot-free, for I contrived to sprain his ankle before the evening closed; however, he is now nearly himself again,

'I shall write to you soon, if anything of consequence takes place; but we expect a little rest at present. I believe we can now muster about two hundred guns for you at Vittoria, which, well brushed up, might be made to fulfil Bonaparte's prediction very faithfully, when he said that if the English dared approach the Ebro, they would find it glittering with his cannon.'

'Camp before San Sebastian: July 18, 1813.

'Our campaign is going on more actively than I gave you reason to expect in my last letter to you from Mondragon. You will hear, before this reaches you, that we are employed in the siege of this place. We have been some days before it, and are going on well. We have it all to ourselves, with the exception of a Portuguese brigade under General Bradford, which is acting with us. Yesterday we attacked and carried by assault a very important line of outwork, which the French

held with a tolerable grace. The 9th supported the Portuguese in their best style, with the loss of about seventy in killed and wounded, and several officers. The Portuguese, I should think, have not lost so many. The French are reported to have lost eleven officers and 250 men on this occasion. The localities in the neighbourhood of a besieged town not being particularly adapted to the performance of feats on horseback, M. Phantom was not brought into play, and his master suffered no other inconvenience than some fatigue and a shock to the nerves, which, however, are recovering their tone this day. The governor seems to have been similarly affected, for he has not been so noisy to-day as usual. Upon the whole, I think he cannot keep his castle many days out of our hands. Not that the fortress itself is so despicable, but we are attacking it with overwhelming means. It will be an important possession in our hands, and, with a naval co-operation, highly defensible.

'20th.—I was interrupted in this part of my letter, and have not been able to continue it till this moment. We have opened this morning a fire from six-and-thirty pieces of cannon upon the town. The weather is dreadful, like that we are used to experience at the equinox, and there appears no chance of its clearing up. I have just left the batteries and trenches full of hasty pudding; they will be knee deep if this weather continues, but it will not retard the operations of the siege.

'I shall enclose you a scratch, which I wish you would send to General Benson, as it may interest him, however deficient in accuracy, and I will add some notes that may help to decipher it.

'I hope Henry corresponds better with you than with me, for I have not heard from him since we fought at Vittoria. I wrote to him the other day, giving an account of our goings on here; and, as there appeared to be no chance of our meeting immediately, I begged that he also would break silence. I believe his division are resting upon their arms, somewhere in the neighbourhood of St. Estevan.

'Pamplona is blockaded by the Spaniards, under O'Donnell. The garrison will probably surrender in a few weeks for want of provisions. I hope we shall go on better in the South since Sir James Murray is displaced; he has been playing antics there which I thought we had all of us forgotten the way of long ago.

'We have some late papers from England; the capture of the *Chesapeake*, and King Joseph's "hairbreadth 'scapes," are among the most interesting details.

'I believe I have said enough on the subject of ague to convince you that he has no hold on me, at least he has had nothing to say to me since I last wrote to you; I suspect he is on the wing to a less riotous neighbourhood, and have little fear of his return. I shall write to Sir Howard, if possible, this day, as the business we are engaged in will, I know, be particularly interesting to him.

'P.S.—General Walker is, I understand, on his way to the army; pray tell the General, when you send him the enclosed, that I am aware he will be at some trouble in deciphering it, but that I am afraid that if I set about composing a drawing I shall be called away in the middle of it.

'I saw the Prince of Orange on Saturday, just before we went to the assault of the outworks; he was very well, and was very kind.

'22nd.—I have just got a letter from Henry; he is encamped above Beira, among the hills whose heads touch heaven: fulfilling Mr. Canning's prediction some time ago, that we should yet see an English army looking down upon the French provinces from the tops of the Pyrenees. He is very well, and congratulates me upon the noise we are making.'

'Before San Sebastian: July 25, 1813.

'We attacked the town yesterday morning, and failed. I do not think we have been engaged in so hazardous an attempt since this country became the scene of our adventures, not even at Badajos.

'I shall not persecute you with the details of this madcap

enterprise, but will enclose another scratch for General Benson, which I will beg of you to send him when you have an opportunity. To him, I know, every little detail of this kind will be interesting, although I have my fears that he, with all the assistance of military knowledge, will hardly be able to decipher it.

'I do not know whether I have ever expressed it to you, but I have always had a dread of being engaged in any of these sieges. We are used to set so much to the hazard, and to dispense with the common precautions which theory would make us believe are necessary to be taken where success is in any degree to be ensured, and which our own repeated experience confirms. Not that in all situations the surest plan of proceeding is the best. Had we, for instance, attended to all the niceties of the art in the attack of Ciudad Rodrigo, or of Badajos, it is possible we should have taken neither. The French armies were collecting for the relief of both, and although they might not have beaten us, they would at least have commanded our attention. I am afraid the success on these occasions, owing to the almost miraculous efforts of our troops, has checked the progress of science among our engineers, and perhaps done more; for it seems to have inspired them with a contempt for as much of it as they had attained. Our soldiers have on all occasions stood fire so well that our artillery have become as summary in their proceedings as our engineers; and, provided they can make a hole in the wall by which we can claw up, they care not about destroying its defences, or facilitating in any degree what is, under the most favourable auspices, the most desperate of all military enterprises. In fact, we have been so called upon hitherto to ensure the success of our sieges by the sacrifice of lives, that our chief engineers and commandants of artillery remind us of what Burke says of the Revolutionary philosophers:—"The mathematicians, from the dry bones of their diagrams, and the chymists, from the soot of their furnaces, bring with them dispositions which make them more than indifferent to the cause of humanity. They seem to consider men as no more than

mice in an air-pump," and calculate upon the expense we shall incur in carrying such and such a post with as much *sang froid* as they do upon the supply of ammunition necessary to bring down the wall.

'We certainly came before this place, supplied, I thought, with all the means necessary for attacking it *en règle*, and I saw no reason for attacking it otherwise. We have, however, conformed in this instance also to what men of science call the new system, but what plain men call an abuse of the old one.

'I have dwelt much longer than I ought to have done upon this subject; but it is at least pardonable in us, who are nearest concerned, to become tedious in passing our censure upon the method of proceeding of those whom we cannot but look upon as the authors of our calamity, which, as it might have been foreseen by them, and was by others, might have been avoided. In a very few minutes five hundred of the flower of the army were cut down—the Royal, which was the pride of the division, the 38th, an excellent corps. The 9th, fortunately, had not time to suffer much; but they lost nearly as many heads as they showed. Most fortunately the troops behaved as they have always done. Sir Thomas Graham bore testimony to it, and I believe Lord Wellington, who was in the neighbourhood in the course of the afternoon, never expressed a doubt of it. He has too often seen them do what men can do to suppose for a moment that they were wanting in this instance. I do not know what is intended to be done; if we have a sufficiency of military stores remaining, and choose to treat the place with the respect it deserves, we shall certainly take it; if not, I suppose we shall blockade.

'Since I wrote to you I have received a letter from Henry; his division is posted upon the frontier, near Berra. He is very well, and promises to write often.

'I am disappointed that you should not have received my letter, written after the business of the 21st, at the time you wrote; but I hope you will give me a good account of it in your next letter. I must beg you all to suppose many pretty

speeches made in return for your congratulations. Nothing will persuade me that you have not, all of you, begun at the wrong end of the despatch, and read upwards, in which case my name comes pop upon you. Whoever got at it by any other route deserves to be celebrated for faithful reading, for it closes a catalogue of proper names almost as copious as the Book of Numbers.[1]

[1] Lord Wellington's despatch on the battle of Vittoria, alluded to in this letter, is to be found at p. 446, Vol. X., 'Wellington Despatches.' The following extracts from it confirm Colonel Gomm's opinion as expressed in his letters.

'To Lord Bathurst:—

'Salvatierra, June 22, 1813.

'I am happy to inform your lordship that the allied army under my command gained a complete victory over the enemy, having driven them from all their positions, having taken from them 151 pieces of cannon, waggons of ammunition, all their baggage, provisions, cattle, treasure, etc. . . . The contest was, however, very severe, and the loss sustained considerable. . . . . Lieutenant-General Sir Thomas Graham particularly reports his sense of the assistance he received from Colonel De Lancey, etc., etc., and Major-General Oswald reports the same of Lieutenant-Colonel Berkeley, of the Adjutant-General's Department, and Lieutenant-Colonel Gomm, of the Quartermaster-General's Department. . . . . Colonel His Serene Highness the Hereditary Prince of Orange was in the field as my aide-de-camp, and conducted himself with his usual gallantry and intelligence.'

The return of the killed and wounded of the Allied army follows. It is painfully suggestive of the fearful nature of the action—

Killed . . .	33 officers	19 sergeants	688 men
Wounded . .	230 „	158 „	3,782 „

There were taken from the enemy—

151 brass ordnance on carriages

415 caissons

and all their ammunition, etc.

With his usual modesty and caution Lord Wellington gives no estimate even of the loss of the enemy, though it must have been severe. The presence of the guns at this battle was in no slight degree due to Gomm himself. 'I had been employed,' as he himself states in a memorandum written some years afterwards, 'to reconnoitre the roads leading from Lamego through Tras-os-Montes, preparatory to the advance of the left column of the army from the Douro to the Ebro; and I was able to report that the passage of artillery was practicable, though with uncommon difficulty, through that ruggedly mountainous region. This obviated the necessity of sending the guns of the two divisions round by the circuitous and superdilatory route of Oporto. I was stormed at right vehemently by the ordnance attachés for my report, but was trusted by the Divisionnaire and higher authorities; and the guns crossed the Douro and went forward with the columns. Half a battalion sometimes, and sometimes a whole battalion, were tackled to the wain; here and there pieces got unshipped, but through the passes all were brought in working order, so that when Marshal

'Tell aunt it gave me as much pleasure as it did her to find the Prince of Orange so handsomely mentioned by Lord Wellington; he deserves everything that is said of him.

'There is another person of whom I was much pleased to hear so many handsome things said by Lord Cathcart, in one of his despatches—the young Count Woronzow. Whenever you see Lady Pembroke, congratulate them for me on his account.

'26th.—It seems decided upon that the siege of this place is, for the present, to be converted into a blockade. One regrets that the operations against it should not have been conducted with more method, the more so as we expected to have made a little conquest of our own. On most other occasions there is a half-faced fellowship in honours, which would not have been the case here, because, if our expectations have been thwarted in this regard, they have been very agreeably so in another, for I thought a broken head or a pension would infallibly have been my portion before I escaped out of the hands of those Philistines, the Engineers. The French made a sortie this morning upon our lines, and, as we did not expect

Jourdain looked abroad through his telescope on the goodly outspread of Sir Thomas Graham's corps along its heights on the morning of Vittoria, and comforted himself and his neighbours with assurance that "the traversers of the mountains were indeed there, but that there could be no guns of the party," we opened upon Gamarra Mayor with a salvo for his further information, and carrying the well-contested village and the passes of the Ladorra, thereby turned his left flank, and threw him and his discomfited army off the Bayonne road and their proper line of retreat by the movement.'

It is said that this action of Gomm's brought him very favourably under the notice of the Duke of Wellington, who never lost sight of him from that day forward; but that it was hard work is evidenced by the allusion in his letter of May 24, when he speaks of the 'officers requiring more driving than their horses,' and that 'if I had not been more interested than they in the success of the enterprise, there was more than once opposition enough to have turned an obstinate man from his opinion.'

Never was any victory more complete than that of Vittoria. Joseph himself escaped with the greatest difficulty, leaving everything down to his travelling carriage and all his despatches in our hands. The whole wreck of his army, including all the plunder which he had accumulated during the French successes, and wrung from every part of Spain with unsparing rapacity, was recklessly abandoned to any who chose to seize it. To have contributed in no trifling degree to such a victory was a great distinction to so young an officer as Gomm.

them, gave us more trouble than was necessary. I quitted my couch in consequence, and am just returned from the trenches rather drowsy.'

'Before San Sebastian: August 1, 1813, 2 A.M.

'I have just received a letter from Henry, bringing me an account of his having received a wound, fortunately not dangerous, in an affair with the enemy on the 24th. A musket-ball entered his back and came out near the left breast. He was on horseback, giving directions to his regiment at the time he received it. He assures me most positively that he is in no danger, and I think the proof of it is that he has been travelling ever since, and writes me a long letter from Irurzum, dated the 24th, so that I conclude he was on his way to Vittoria, where he will be perfectly quiet, and have the best attendance that can be found in the army. He tells me at the end of his letter that he is leaving off to write to you; but as we make short cuts from this part of the country to England, and as the officer who takes charge of a letter I wrote to you a day or two ago goes on board the *Surveillant* to-morrow for the purpose of taking the first sail for England, I think it very probable my letter will reach you before his, and arm you against idle reports. I assure you, upon my honour, that I have disguised or concealed nothing that he tells me of himself, so that you see you have no reason whatever to be alarmed on account of his safety. I shall write to him to-morrow, and remind him of the advantages I have here for sending letters to England, which will be a double inducement to him to let me hear of him almost every day. If he wants anything of me personally I can get to Vittoria in a very short time, upon post-horses, but this confounded siege does not leave it a matter of choice for me.

'You will hear before this reaches you, perhaps, that Lord Wellington has obtained some important advantages over Soult, in the direction of Pamplona, within these few days. Pamplona must be distressed.

'Our siege continues in the state which the Engineers call

a lull. When we commence again I dare say we shall do it a little less *en charlatan*, and more *en règle*.

'Adieu! Once more I beg of you not to be foolish about Henry. You shall have accounts of him from me as often as I can send them, but do not conclude from what I have said that I have the means of sending every day, and grow fidgetty because you do not hear from me as often as you wish. My letters will bring you late news when they reach you, but it is only now and then that opportunities offer.

'P.S.—My dear Aunt,—Upon second thoughts I have directed this letter to you. You will understand why.'

'Before San Sebastian: August 7, 1813.

'I have just received a letter from Henry, dated the 3rd, from Vittoria. I shall give you his own words: "Now that I can get rest I am sure I shall come round very rapidly. I am perfectly free from pain, and my wound is healing fast." I received another letter at the same time, equally gratifying, from Major Campbell, of his own regiment, a son of General Campbell, who commanded at Gibraltar, and an old chum of Henry's. He says: "Col. Campbell being sick, Gomm commanded. He received the ball as he was most gallantly leading the Grenadiers forward, and fell just before three companies of the regiment charged."

'I envy him his command of the regiment at such a moment. It is a luxury that my Staff situation places out of my reach, and I can never attend at such a ceremony but as an interloper.

'We continue here as usual. Soult's loss in his late *rencontre* with Lord Wellington is rated at little less than 20,000 men. The Prince of Orange carries the despatches home. I hope they will make a major-general of him.

'We are in hourly expectation of Sir James Leith's arrival; he sailed from Lisbon several weeks ago. During his absence we have been commanded by a very able man and excellent officer, General Oswald; so that, you see, we are fortunate in the rulers they give us.

'Before San Sebastian: August 13, 1813.

'Since I wrote to you I have paid a visit to Irun and Fontarabia, and several other interesting points. This whole country is beautiful, and productive beyond any I have ever seen, particularly in apples. The orchards are without end. I have had little time to talk to you about the beauty of the neighbourhood of San Sebastian or of the spot itself, but yet it is of the first order. Happiness and plenty seem to be its characteristics. We have sadly marred both one and the other. I am afraid we shall be obliged to destroy a great part of the town. The convent of which I have already had occasion to speak to you in several of my letters, was for many years the asylum of all the females of noble family residing in this and the neighbouring provinces who took the veil. It was a handsome and delightfully situated building, and such an untimely ruin as we have made of it among us it would be difficult to imagine. Our principal batteries are shortly to thunder from among the tombs. He is indeed grim-visaged War when we contemplate him under such circumstances.

'Indeed, your fête at Vauxhall seems to have been a spirited performance. I hope the Prince of Orange will give you another opportunity of doing gay things.'

'San Sebastian: September 5, 1813.

'Things have continued in so unsettled a state since the assault of the town until the present moment, and my attention has been diverted in so many thousand ways, that I have neither had opportunity nor disposition to write to you earlier. This I had at first less reason to regret, as there was a chance of my being enabled, by a delay of a day or two, to set you quite at rest upon the subject of San Sebastian, and to report to you upon the final proceedings of the laborious and hazardous service we have for some time been engaged in. I cannot do this entirely even now, but you need be under very little apprehension about what remains to be done. The French still hold the castle, but they hold it like people that

are anxious for an opportunity of surrendering with a good grace; and I fully expect that the opening of our batteries upon the castle wall, and preparations for a fresh assault, will answer their purpose; there is little *acharnement* left among them.

'I am sorry to learn that the despatches have been sent home unaccompanied by the returns of the killed and wounded; if so, there will unavoidably be a great deal of needless alarm excited, and I regret that I did not write to you while the tumult raged. Our loss has been severe, more even than I expected, that of the Division alone exceeds sixteen hundred. Our total loss on this occasion must be considerably upwards of two thousand men. Many valuable men have fallen—none more regretted, or more deservedly so, than poor Crawfurd of the 9th. General Leith, behaving as usual, was struck several times, at last very severely. I am happy to hear, however, that he is doing well, and have great hopes he will not lose his arm. He had only joined us the preceding day. The mural crown will be well established upon his head by this last exploit. All circumstances considered, it is very gratifying to us all (of the Division I mean) to have been forced at length to carry the town by assault.

'Failure, of late, in anything that British troops undertake, is something so rare, that the impossibility of succeeding, and a conviction of it in the minds of those who do fail, is scarcely excuse enough to themselves or their friends; and so it was with us after our first assault on this place; we had many friends on this occasion, who, had they seen as much of the heroism of the men they calumniated, in point of patience and endurance of hard labour, during six weeks of trial, as they did of their intrepidity in the hour of assault, would not certainly have required anything further to convince them that all was as it should be in the first instance. I have not written to you since our batteries opened a second time upon the town, for the reasons that I give in the beginning of my letter. We recommenced our operations, I think, on the 27th, took possession of the island, greatly impaired the

enemy's defences, and improved our access to the breach, which was also rendered much more extensive, and on the 31st, at eleven o'clock in the day, attacked the town. The attack of a breach by daylight is something new in the annals of modern warfare, and spectators say that the *coup d'œil* answered their expectations.

'The enemy maintained his post obstinately, and held the breach for nearly three hours, springing several mines, and availing himself of every advantage that the nature of such a contest places on the side of those who defend. At length we forced a passage into the town, and before four o'clock the whole of it was in our possession, the enemy withdrawing to the castle: not, however, till after he had made some obstinate stands in the town, which was barricaded with great attention, and might have been even more obstinately contested than it was; but they were exhausted by the long stand they made at the breach. The day closed as it always has done since the first town was taken, in riot and tumult; and although many of the excesses committed at Badajos were avoided here, San Sebastian's is a more melancholy story than either that of Badajos or Rodrigo. I have written to you from both these places under similar circumstances, and I fear I have made tales of woe already too familiar to your ears.

'I date my letter from San Sebastian, but really with very little title, for I am writing from among its ruins. With the exception of ten or twelve fortunate buildings there is nothing left of San Sebastian but the walls of its houses, and these are falling every instant with a tremendous crash. How the fire was communicated in the first instance is uncertain, but I think there is little doubt of its having been done intentionally by the enemy; and in a town so constructed as this, there was little chance of its being got under when once kindled—particularly by our soldiers, who were busied about anything else. It was not a very large town, but a very handsome one, full of excellent houses, and more regularly built than any I have ever seen, except Madrid; a place of considerable trade, populous, the abode of many wealthy

merchants, and containing a great deal of treasure, at the moment of the assault. Imagine what must have been the scenes passing before our eyes during the last four days. We have been driven almost to the ramparts by the fire, while the people have rushed in crowds where certain destruction seemed to threaten them, in search of their property, great part of which they had concealed and buried. Much has certainly been saved; we have done everything in our power to assist them; a great deal has been plundered, and a vast proportion must still remain buried under the ruins. The fire has nearly exhausted itself, for it has nothing left to prey upon, and we are now endeavouring to form communications from the ramparts to the only line of buildings still standing, in the direction of the castle. The houses were so lofty that every street has been completely choked up with the ruins. The outer walls were all of very handsome stone; in many parts there is scarcely one stone standing upon another; in others, the whole wall is still perfect in its height, but overhanging the street, and appears to be only waiting for the first high wind to complete the destruction. The people who were its inhabitants have carried away everything they can hope to save, and excepting that now and then a peasant may be observed dodging about among the embers, led more by curiosity than interest, there is nothing living to be met with but a soldier. Never surely was there a more complete picture of devastation than this place presents. I do not know whether it is not more distressing in its present quiet state than even when the fire was raging at its height, and every effort was making, not only by the people to save their property, but by all ranks and conditions to rescue some hundreds of wounded, French as well as English, from the flames, which were every instant gaining ground upon them, and many decrepid and venerable inhabitants, who were ill prepared, from their age and infirmities, to meet such a visitation.

'I have in my recollection Ariosto's beautiful description of the Sacking of Biserta, and I believe there is no part of his

animated painting to which the fate of San Sebastian cannot afford a parallel; but I shall finish my tale of horrors and turn your attention to a subject much more agreeable. I have, since I sat down to write, received a very good letter from Henry. He continues going on very well, says he feels almost as well as ever he did in his life, although his wound is still troublesome after any exertion; he talks of joining soon, but I hope he will still defer it for some weeks. Soult was again repulsed, you will see, on the day we assaulted the town, and I cannot think he will make any further serious attempt to relieve it.

'I trust a few days will enable me to give you a good account of our unaccommodating governor; in the meantime be assured we are doing perfectly well.'

'San Sebastian: September 11, 1813.

'It does not take away from the satisfaction with which I write to you upon our obtaining complete possession of this place, to find that I was not raising your expectations too high, when I told you in my last letter from the town that I did not think General Rey looked as if he meant to be very romantic in his defence of the castle. We opened a fire upon him from sixty *bouches à feu* on the 8th, and in less than two hours after he proposed to capitulate. The day following, the garrison laid down their arms, and to-day they are embarking for England; their strength is about fifteen hundred, the remains of three thousand six hundred when we came before this place. We are not at all sorry to get rid of them so soon; they are a disgusting set of fellows. The French of the present day appear to me to represent that very worst state of society described by Montesquieu, under which self-interest, properly so called, is the sole spring of action. Treachery, intrigue, bad faith, at home as well as abroad, the acknowledged rules of conduct, and success through any of these channels the only title to respect. I trust we shall go on verifying Montesquieu's opinion of the weakness of a State so constituted, against those who subscribe to a different code. General Rey is a coarse fellow; his chief of the staff, M. Songeon, a great rogue, and holding a post, I should

think, not yet equal to his merits The only gentleman among them is the *ci-devant* commandant of the place, the Baron de Santuari—he is one of the ancient noblesse. We took the liberty of telling some of them that we thought him at least a match for his new associates; *que l'ancienne valoit bien la nouvelle.*

'*Ah! ma foi, oui.*

'Here, then, ends our siege, which we have all longed so heartily to bring to a conclusion, but in which, I believe, we need not regret our having been employed. Our loss has been heavy: we have about three thousand men *hors de combat* since the commencement of the siege. Many of these are slightly wounded, and will return to us. Sir James Leith, I am happy to tell you, is recovering rapidly, and will resume the command of us in the course of a few weeks. This climate is wonderfully healthy; all our wounded recover faster than they have been known to do elsewhere, and "but for these vile guns" there would be no ailing among us. We have scarcely any sickness.

'I have heard from Henry very lately, and of him frequently; he is going on as well as possible, and, I dare say, will soon be able to return to his regiment. Your prognostics upon my hair-breadth 'scapes entertain me exceedingly. I wish I could be as easily satisfied myself as some of you are kind enough to be upon this point; but I am afraid the only inference I shall ever be able to draw from it at all convincing to myself will be that I am a lucky fellow.

'It is uncertain what they intend doing with us now. I believe all is likely to remain quiet in front. There have been reports that Soult is again upon his legs, but I do not believe them. I do not think the climate will suffer us to retain our mountain positions many weeks longer, nor will it be necessary. I hope they will leave us where we are, rather than bring us into third or fourth line for a few days, among the mountains. We are collecting again by degrees, but our forces are certainly at present a little like the walls of St. Sebastian—*un peu délabrées.*

'I forgot whether I told you Le Blanc was wounded in the assault; he is, however, doing very well.'

CHAPTER XV.

1813–1814.

DRIVING THE FRENCH OVER THE FRONTIER—DEATH OF MOREAU—NEARLY TAKEN PRISONER WHILE OUT FOR A RECONNAISSANCE AT BIARRITZ—WOUNDED—SEVERE FIGHTING, NIVE, NIVELLE, AND ST. PIERRE—ALLIES NEARING PARIS—INVESTMENT OF BAYONNE—LAST SORTIE—RAISING OF THE BOURBON WHITE FLAG—HOSTILITIES SUSPENDED—NAPOLEON BANISHED TO ELBA—TROOPS EMBARK FOR AMERICA—ON LEAVE TO PARIS—LIEUTENANT-COLONEL COLDSTREAM GUARDS.

To his Sister.

'Ozarzum: September 27, 1813.

'I THINK you will be pleased with the novelty of hearing from Henry and myself under the same cover; and therefore I write two lines—he promises to write as many.

'We were relieved the day before yesterday by a Spanish garrison at San Sebastian, and our camp is now about two miles in front of Ozarzum, forming part of the second line.

'I yesterday received your letter of the 13th. You must have received the despatches (though, I am afraid, not my letter) the following day. I am glad to find General Oswald so handsomely mentioned; it is no panegyric, I assure you. We have left Sir James near San Sebastian, but I am happy to say his wounds are healing fast.

'We are most anxiously looking out for accounts from our side of the battle of Dresden, the Crown Prince's movements, Moreau, etc. There has certainly been hard work, and I believe Bonaparte has been well beaten in the end.

'They talk of our moving, but it is very uncertain. We have had violent weather lately, but the equinox seems to have passed over, and they tell us we are likely to have a month or two of fine weather.

'Henry is going to Passages for a short time; it is the best place for him. I am just going to ride over, and try to get him decently put up there, which is no very easy matter.

'Pray thank all my friends very kindly for me, who are so thoughtful as to inquire about me. I am afraid they will begin to think I have fallen under the displeasure of Southey's Kehama, "I charm thy life from the weapons of strife," etc.; but pray assure them I am in a very sane state of body at this moment, and I trust also of mind.

'You shall hear from me when we make any movement.

'Just as I had closed my letter the packet which the Prince of Orange was so kind as to take charge of was put into my hands.

'I am afraid I have made you look forward with too much confidence to a visit from me in the winter. I do not know, but I think it looks as if our winter would not be a decidedly quiet one, and subject to many false alarms; and I should feel rather restless if I were at a distance when there was a chance of anything important taking place. Under such circumstances, too, it would be very difficult to obtain leave from Lord Wellington.

'Ozarzum: October 3, 1813.

'Henry's wound is not yet closed, nor ought it till the cloth, etc., which the ball forced in before it have worked their way out. Part of the coat has already made its appearance, and he is in anxious expectation of the shirt and waistcoat! In the meantime he suffers no pain, and is only prevented from taking violent exercise. He eats stewed meats whenever he can get them, and drinks more than you dare. All is still quiet here, and so long as it continues so this is the best place for him. . . .'

'Camp before St. Jean de Luz: October 9, 1813.

'We crossed the Bidasoa the day before yesterday in face of the enemy, who made very little opposition, and retired skirmishing to the position he now occupies covering St. Jean de Luz. Our loss does not exceed one hundred and fifty.

'I have just got your letter of the 20th of September. I am glad you are all pleased with us at San Sebastian, for we were obliged to put up with many insults here during its progress. . . . I got a glimpse of the Prince of Orange just after crossing the river. We were very glad to meet again and upon French ground. He was very kind.

'We are fortunate in having another day's rest. I confess to you that I employed the whole of yesterday in sleep, and only now begin to feel as I did before we marched. It was a fatiguing day, though not a very hard fighting one. This is a fine and fertile country, and offers every temptation to get a little more of it. I think we shall shortly throw the French army behind the Adour, and I hope that my next letter will be at least from the neighbourhood of St. Jean de Luz. The peasantry, fearful of retaliation, which, by-the-bye, they have good reason to expect, have in general fled from their homes. I hope a few days will reconcile them to the strange situation of an English army in their territory, and will render them a little less savage.

'Sir Thomas Graham has just closed a bright career, and is going home immediately. This was the last of his fields. Sir John Hope has just taken the command of the Left Column. We are fortunate in being always under men who have particularly distinguished themselves. I have scarcely been able to see Sir John yet, but I shall soon take an opportunity of renewing our acquaintance. Should we move forward in a day or two towards the Nivelle, I shall give you an account of our proceedings.'

'Camp des Sans Culottes: November 7, 1813.

'I have not heard from Henry for some days, but I have very good accounts of him.

'No movement has taken place since the fall of Pamplona, owing to the extreme badness of the weather. A great deal of snow has fallen about Roncesvalles, and unless the season favours us more than it promises to do, I am afraid we shall find it difficult to establish our winter quarters upon the

Adour. We expect great tidings from the north by the next arrivals. That madman Buonaparte has puzzled us all by his march upon Berlin. I am afraid my poor aunt[1] will have her quarters again beat up, but the inconvenience can only be momentary. His ruin seems inevitable, and so much do I build upon it that I am not so anxious to get home this winter because I think everything must be settled shortly; and having been such a stickler hitherto I should be sorry to be out of the way while anything remained to do. If we have another campaign in this country I promise you I will do all I can to get among you in the winter; but I trust we shall have a Bourbon on the throne of France before I see you again.

'A thousand thanks for your copy of the Emperor Alexander's letter. It is worthy of him, and a tribute due to the memory of the most valuable man perhaps of our time. What a loss! so unexpected, at such a moment! He resembled Turenne in his death as he appears to have done in his character and disposition, but more fortunate than Turenne, or than any man who ever lived, perhaps, in this respect—that while others, however great and good they may have been, were forwarding the views of an ambitious master or themselves, at best providing for the welfare of a particular State, Moreau's[2] was the cause of all mankind, and the blessings of all ages and of all nations will be upon him to the end of time. I believe it is the first time that such a situation has been vacant since the world began. It requires a Buonaparte to

[1] The Countess Brühl.

[2] Jean Victor Moreau was one of the most celebrated of the Generals of the French Republic, and was born in 1763. He had been at the early age of thirty-two, Commander-in-Chief of the army of the Rhine, shortly afterwards, however, he was expatriated by Buonaparte, probably through his fear of finding in him a successful rival; he retired to America, whence in 1813 he was summoned by the allies and more especially by Russia. At Prague he found the Emperors of Austria and Russia with the King of Prussia, all of whom received him with great cordiality, and he was induced to aid them against his countrymen. Soon afterwards while conversing with the Emperor Alexander on horseback in the battle before Dresden, a cannon ball which passed through his horse, shattered his legs, and after suffering two amputations, with great fortitude, he died universally esteemed and regretted by those whom he had joined.

produce it, and no one living was perhaps more worthy to fill it than Moreau. We have heard nothing yet of the cargo of medals, etc., that have been shipped off to us in this part of the world, but I believe they are on their way. I find they have as yet only extended their favours as far as Salamanca. I should think, therefore, that the high road through Vittoria and the crooked path up to San Sebastian would lead some of us very near to a cross.

'I find you had received my letter of the 9th just before you closed your last. You shall hear from me again the moment anything takes place, but we shall act a very subordinate part upon the left, whenever it is to be.' . . .

'Bidart: December 2, 1813.

'I have just received your letter congratulating me upon Henry's promotion. I assure you I look for as many congratulations on this event as people in general do on their own account, for I do not know any piece of good fortune that could possibly fall to my lot at this moment that would be half so gratifying to me as this promotion of Henry's. It is so desirable a point to have gained on so many considerations, and I perfectly agree with you in expecting that this piece of success will be followed up by the complete cure of his wound, as I do in thinking that it may have been retarded by the suspense and anxiety occasioned by his disappointment in the first instance. . . . Since I wrote to you last he is gone to Passages, and waits the decision of the medical board to enable him to go to Bilbao. . . .

'We are all quiet here since I last wrote to you, excepting such as go in quest of adventures, and under this form, *j'ai manqué d'être pris;* in plain English, I ought to have been taken the other day. There is a village called Biarritz a little in our front, which neither the French nor ourselves have had the heart to occupy as a cantonment, although neither party have scrupled to forage upon it as long as it was worth a straw. Our cavalry on this occasion made a heavier draft upon the village than usual, and I thought the fourrage

afforded me a good opportunity for a reconnaissance. However, the jealousy of the foe was excited. The cavalry rode in, as they term it, and the foragers were put to confusion, and I for a few minutes was in a scrape, and had not my horse shown that he had legs enough for some half-dozen or more of French Dragoons, I should very probably have been groaning in durance vile at this moment, in place of lolling in an arm-chair over a roaring fire telling you the story. I promise you, forage is all gone in Biarritz.

'The people have all returned to their houses, and appear perfectly well satisfied with their guests, which, considering that we are not of their own inviting, is more than we have a right to expect.

'Tell aunt she need be under no apprehensions about my French. What stock I have of it I flatter myself I shall preserve tolerably pure, in spite of the Gascon. You may tell her, too, by way of encouragement, that I have Madame de Sévigné, Racine, and Molière constantly at my elbow, and that if she does not think the charm powerful enough yet, I can bring the gravity of a Montesquieu into the balance—as sound, I believe, in his French as in his doctrines.'

'Bidart: December 15, 1813.

'It has been quite impossible for me to write you a line until this minute, and I am afraid my letter will hardly be in time to keep pace with the despatch, which I am the more anxious it should do, as you will most probably learn that I have been slightly hurt in the scuffle, and I wish you to be assured in the first instance from myself how very slightly it is. I cannot give you a stronger proof of it than by telling you that although I was struck early on the 9th, I was not only able to keep my place during the whole of that day, but to return to it on the two following days, which were much more trying ones, and I do not feel myself at all the worse for the exercise I was obliged to take during this time. The musket ball, with whose progress I happened to interfere, passed through the fore part of my saddle and glanced off

upon my left side below the hip bone, and although it scarcely did more than cut the skin, it struck with some violence, for the honest marksman who fired it was not far off. I have, of course, been stiff and inconvenienced by it since, but nothing more. I have already saved myself as much as it has been possible during the busy days that succeeded this, and now there is every prospect of my being able to keep quiet for some time. I did not give you much reason in my last letter to expect an alarm of this nature, but I recollect some time ago preparing you for a busy winter when talking about leave of absence.

'Poor General Oswald will be sadly disappointed. His wife is at Bilbao, and he went to see her, in full confidence that nothing of consequence was about to take place, a very few days ago.

'Our loss has been severe, and, to tell you the truth, I never have been exposed to so many risks as during the 10th and 11th. We fought with very little interruption on both of these days from sunrise until dark. I think the loss of the division amounts to nearly 1,400 men. We marched on the 9th with 3,700, so that we have lost considerably over one-third of our force.

'As I do not think I shall be able to write to the general immediately, I will give you the outline of our operations during these days, and it may perhaps interest him till I can write more at leisure. On the 9th Lord Wellington crossed the Nive with four divisions of the army, and placed them between that river and the Adour. The enemy made little opposition to this movement, but to favour it the left column advanced along the great Bayonne road, and the 5th Division drove the enemy's posts beyond the village of Anglet, which they held during the day, and enabled Sir John Hope to make a close reconnaissance of the town, and its defences on this side. In the evening we returned to our former position. Early on the 10th Soult attacked the centre of the army at Arcangues with its right upon the Nive, but the right division repulsed all his attacks. He then collected by all accounts

between 20,000 and 30,000 men in our front, and endeavoured to force us upon the great road. He made two spirited attacks, but was repulsed in both. He, however, kept possession of some ground which it was necessary we should recover. This was attempted on the morning of the 11th, but the enemy had increased his force, and it was with difficulty we could hold the ground upon the day before. During these last two days the 5th Division, alone with two Portuguese brigades, sustained every attack upon the great road.

'On the 12th a skirmish took place which ought to have been avoided, and in which the Guards lost some men. Both armies remained in their positions, but during the night Soult withdrew from our front, and on the following morning attacked the right of the army between the Nive and Adour, at St. Pierre, where he was completely beaten, and we gained several important positions, which have enabled us to command the course of the Adour, and cut off the supplies from Bayonne, except such as are sent by the roads on the other side of the river, which are almost impassable. The French loss has been very great on this last day; the country, being open, enabled Sir Rowland Hill to follow up his success: on our side the reverse, covered with wood and intersected with hedges and ditches, very like the most cultivated parts of England.

'On the morning of the 10th three German battalions came over to us. Soult has disarmed all those who remain. We are now strengthening our position in front of Bidart, but I think Soult will remain on the defensive for some time. The French fought with more spirit than usual on these days, and the country enabled them to carry on that species of warfare in which they excel. I am happy the 7th Division has been all this time in reserve, because Henry will have no reason to regret his being absent from it. He must have arrived at Bilbao some days ago, but I have not heard from him since he left Passages. My poor little Phantom was hit in the leg on the 11th and is quite lame, but I am in hopes a few days' rest will bring him about again. I am fortunately well mounted at this moment. Herries is always with the column, and is

much flattered at your recollecting him. He has escaped through the whole business like a very lucky fellow. We have been very fortunate in our weather in these fighting days, for we have had very little rain.'[1]

'Bidart: Christmas Day, 1813.

'The mail is made up earlier this week than usual, and I am taken by surprise. Scarcely time to wish you all as merry a Christmas as we mean to pass, and to express my regret that I am not able to pass it with you all, but I trust there are still many such in reserve.

'My stiff flank has been most accommodating since I gave you an account of the trick that was played upon him. I have been able to pay him many little attentions in return for the respite he gave me after being so roughly handled, and they have had the desired effect; so that the only inconvenience now remaining is the habit of feeling rather cramped in my movements which a few days will be sufficient to remove.

'I have just got a letter from Henry from Bilbao. He gives an excellent account of himself, and says that his wound is everything but healed. I wrote to him immediately after the late *fracas*. . . .

'They are going to give me a medal for San Sebastian. This, with Vittoria, will give me the cross. I am fortunate in having missed none of those occasions for which medals have been struck since my rank enabled me to benefit by it.

[1] To understand these battles of December, 1813, one must study the detailed history of the war. It is sufficient here to bring to the mind of the reader of these letters that Bayonne was considered by Napoleon and Soult as one of the great bulwarks of France, and it was to render it untenable by the enemy that Lord Wellington advanced to the banks of the Adour. Soult on the other hand was eager to drive the Allies back into Spain, and hence the continual series of battles from the 9th to the 13th. During those days the loss of the Allies was 5,000, among whom were 280 officers. Napier says that the battle of St. Pierre, fought on the 13th, was one of the most desperate in the whole war. Lord Wellington declared that he had never seen a field so thickly strewn with dead.

Five general officers on the side of the British were among the casualties, viz., Hope, Robinson, Barnes, Le Cor, and Ashworth. It is not to be wondered at, therefore, that Colonel Gomm says that he was never exposed to so many risks as during those eventful days.

I do not know what they will make of this last business, but as far as we were concerned I am not sure that it was not a greater trial to the constitution, moral and physical, than any of the others. I long to see Lord Wellington's account of it, for I believe it is generally thought that our soldiers were as tenacious of their estate as usual. . . . . By-the-bye, my Biarritz adventure, which happened some days before, was by no means a *coup perdu*. I do not know what I should have done with the division on the 9th had I not joined in this predatory excursion.

'I saw Dallas an hour ago. He is in excellent spirits, quite easy, and not only by his own account, but by those of the medical people, doing extremely well. My poor little Phantom is nearly recovered; but I have not been able to ride him yet. Adieu! All is quiet now, and likely to continue so.'

'Arbonne: January 15, 1814.

'I am now quite well, and have got completely rid of all stiffness. You will perceive that we have changed our quarters. Soult has been making some movements on our right which have occasioned us to extend in that direction, and certainly we are not gainers by the move, for it has thrown us into a sad hole. Our position is the same that the Light Division defended on the 10th. I have letters from Henry. He does not yet report his wound as being closed; but the rest and attention he is able to give it at Bilbao must certainly turn to good account. . . . . Your two last letters confirmed my suspicions that two of mine, written shortly after the passage of the Nivelle, must have been lost in the packet that was taken some time ago. In one of them I begged you to send me in a letter a yard or two of medal ribbon. They have been very sparing of it in their distribution of favours, and it is not to be procured here. I have promised half of what you send me to a friend of mine, a Portuguese colonel, who wears a cross, and wears it so eternally, that his ribbon is wearing out, and I believe he had rather barefoot than ribbonless.

'We are all anxiously looking out for the next arrivals. Lord Castlereagh's mission looks as if we were all serious. Everything relating to the Prince of Orange has given me very great satisfaction, as well on public as private considerations. I trust we shall yet see other revolutions accomplished.'

'Arbonne: January 24, 1814.

'Soult has just withdrawn some of his outposts from our front, and fixed them nearer the town. I believe he has sent away part of his army, for what purpose we learn not.'

'Arbonne: February 6, 1814.

'We have been doing nothing on either side since I wrote to you. If people who had alternately lived in palaces and hovels during the last five or six years, and frequently wanting both, were likely to be affected in spirits by bad housing, we should be the most woebegone people in the world at this moment, but we are either philosophic or insensible as far as this regards us.

'The Duc d'Angoulême's arrival among us has given me very great pleasure.

'I trust that before six months have passed we shall see Louis XVIII. fixed upon the throne of France with the same pretensions that the first Bourbon had to it, "et par droit de naissance, et par droit de conquête;" the first is inseparable from his person, and the other, I think, we shall contrive among us to obtain for him. I never despaired of this when things looked most ruinous.

'I have not heard from Henry for some days. I am much afraid that the enemy having withdrawn great part of their force from Bayonne will lead him to suspect that we shall shortly make a forward movement, and will be the means of bringing him up to the army. I do all I can to dissuade him from it, and no one will think him wise if he does it.

'Sir James Leith's appointment has given me the greatest satisfaction. It is one of those instances in which we see high qualifications joined to eminent services justly appreciated and

rewarded. Perhaps Sir James may a short time hence have it in his power to be of use to me in the recovery of my possessions in the west; if so, I shall not spare him.'

'Arbonne: February 13, 1814.

'I find we are no longer suffered to frank letters at the Quartermaster-General's Office; and, in addition to this grievance, I have just learnt that poor Major O'Neale, to whom I addressed all my packets for you, is dead. I am, therefore, under the necessity of sending you this by the direct post.

'You will be glad to hear that Henry has at length determined upon going to England. We are expecting to move immediately; but I hope this will not change his determination, for he appears to be in a very unfit state to accompany us.

'If the reports from the interior for the last two or three days have any foundation, the Allies must be now at the gates of Paris. I hope in a few days we shall be nearer to them ourselves.'

'Arcangues: March 3, 1814.

'Since I last wrote to you the army has been making some movements of importance. A bridge has been thrown over the Adour near its mouth, and the greater part of the left column are now investing the citadel of Bayonne. We have been for several days occupying the positions between the Nive and Adour, and have now an extended line from the great road to St. Jean de Luz, to the Nive.

'Lord Wellington has been making considerable progress with the right and centre of the army, and has gained some brilliant advantages over Soult.[1] You will, I have no doubt, receive accounts of many sanguinary conflicts that have never taken place, before the authentic reports reach you; but I

[1] During the latter part of February, 1814, Lord Wellington had traversed with his right wing about eighty miles of country and driven the enemy over the numerous branches of the Adour, forcing him out of his magazines at Dax, Mont Marsan, and Aire, and gained the battles of Orthes and Aire.

must warn you on these occasions not to consider us as being implicated, for they seem disposed to give us a very easy time of it during the siege, and I am not sorry for it. So much has fallen to our share lately that another siege at this moment would almost exterminate our little division.

'I shall be happy to hear that Henry has reached the end of his journey, and is within range of a little of your nursing.

'The weather, which was very fine when we began our movements, and continued so for some days after, has again broken, and high winds and heavy rains are once more the order of the day.

'We are anxious to know what is doing in the neighbourhood of Paris, for we understand that in spite of Buonaparte's victories over them, the allies are in the suburbs. I hope the report I saw the other day in one of the French papers of the Count Woronzow having been made prisoner is of a piece with the rest. . . . .

'Thank you for the ribbon and the bill; the Portuguese colonel is delighted with the former, I had rather he would take a fancy to the other.'

'Biarritz: *April 10, 1814.*

'Poor Henry will be vexed and gratified to hear that his brigade, and particularly the 6th Regiment, have been performing a very handsome piece of service lately on the right bank of the Garonne. We have not yet heard of Lord Wellington's entering Toulouse, but it is probable he has. Accounts from Bordeaux state that the Allies entered Paris on the 31st, and that General Bubna was in possession of Lyons, but that in neither had the white flag been displayed. Here we are as quiet as people threatening to besiege a town can be. I believe the siege has not yet been fully determined upon. The bad weather, I am in hopes, has all passed away, and we are beginning during these last few days really to believe that we are in the south of France.'

'Biarritz: *April 17, 1814.*

'You will be glad to hear that we had last night a communication from the Governor of Bayonne, in which he proposes

a suspension of hostilities until a fuller confirmation of all the great events that have recently taken place at Paris shall have reached him; an address to him from the Provisional Government is hourly expected. He adds that it is to be regretted that we did not communicate to him earlier the information that had reached us officially several days ago, as it would have prevented the sortie made from the town on the morning of the 14th.

'Would to God it had been communicated in spite of form, although a most proper form; for there are cases, extraordinary ones, which justify and even dictate the breach of order, and this was one. We should not then have had to lament Sir John Hope wounded and made prisoner, poor Herries wounded by his side, and also a prisoner, General Hay killed —the man who had so often commanded us on fortunate occasions, and for whom I had so high a respect and regard, whose wife and three daughters had just completed a journey overland from Lisbon, and had arrived at this place only three days before. Upwards of 600 men and an unusual proportion of officers of distinction killed, wounded and prisoners. The enemy would also have been spared a very severe loss, perhaps the subjects of Louis XVIII. Herries's[1] wound is serious; his leg is broken by a grape-shot. I heard from him yesterday; he tells me he is doing well, and they are in hopes of saving the leg. I am sorry to say he gives a better account of himself than any of his friends do for him. I had little to say to this business, the attack being made on the side of the citadel; what they did on this side was merely by way of diversion. We are expecting to hear of Soult's following the example of Ney and Marmont. We have, however, heard nothing of him, since he was beaten out of Toulouse by Lord Wellington.'

'Biarritz: April 22. 1814.

'I told you in my last letter that our governor had agreed to a cessation of hostilities. Soult has since made his arrange-

[1] Captain of the 9th Dragoons, afterwards Lieut.-General Sir William Herries, K.C.H., C.B.

ments with the Provisional Government, and I should think the gates of Bayonne would be open to us immediately. Since my last account poor Herries has lost his leg. I expected it; but he is doing well, and is well taken care of. The public accounts will show you that I made light of our loss on that occasion, but I find I did so too with regard to that of the enemy. I feel a sort of savage satisfaction in this, which probably would not belong to me if I were myself more personally concerned.

'So these big wars are drawing fast towards their close. I do not know whether every one has been affected in the same manner with myself by late events, but I declare that from the moment I heard of the decided turn affairs had taken at Paris, I have felt as if some piece of great good fortune had befallen me, something that was to brighten the prospect of all my future life; and certainly if all expect the same result that I do from the re-establishment of the French monarchy and the revival of old institutions in France, all must have felt in the same way. I think the restoration of France to order, and to its proper political place among the commonwealths of Europe, is like the redemption of man from a second Fall. But they say Talleyrand is gone over to England to fetch the king. I am afraid he has too much of the corkscrew in mind as well as in body (if the tailors of Biarritz report faithfully), too much hackneyed in the ways of men, to become in good earnest the Mayenne of his day—"*le meilleur sujet du plus juste des princes.*" I hope the ministers have taken an opportunity of searching his pockets for old scraps of Voltaire, Helvetius, Diderot, D'Alembert, Rousseau, etc., a whole tribe of necromancers or madmen, whose names I dare say you have never heard, and whose works I trust you never will read. Should they be successful I wish you would prevail upon your friends at Court to shove one volume of Edmund Burke's works into the King of France's side pocket; it will charm away the fiends, and will teach him how to govern his kingdom too; for although I do not think that what Burke required of France could have been done at the time he wished it, I think it can

now, and that there never was, or will be, a moment so favourable as this.'

To Sir Howard Douglas.

'Biarritz: April 24, 1814.

'Although I have been well aware how gratifying it would be to you to receive some account of our poor friend Herries, in addition to the public ones, I have delayed writing to you for some days past, in the hope that the events taking place in all other quarters would before now have obtained for us a free communication from Bayonne, and that I should have been able to have had an interview with him before I wrote. Our governor, however, does not yet consider himself authorised to desert the Imperial cause. Official communications are hourly expected, both from the Government and from Soult, which will, no doubt, point out his duty and his interest in terms sufficiently unequivocal to bring him to a decision. In the meantime all hostilities are at an end.

'I suppose you know the nature of Herries' wound. He was with Sir John Hope in the morning the garrison made the sortie; his leg was broken by a grape-shot, and, as I feared, has since been amputated. The last accounts we have from the town state that he is doing well, and is well taken care of. Among other circumstances attending this unlucky business (for it might have been prevented) there is nothing that has vexed me half so much as this unfortunate blow upon poor Herries; for he is a young man that ought not to have been maimed so early in life, and by the last ball the enemy has hurled at us. But I dare say he will bear it with much more temper than I could do. It is a pity we did not think fit to communicate to the governor the official intelligence we had received two days before of the entrance of the Allies into Paris, and all the circumstances attending it. It is to be supposed that this piece of justice, I think, towards the governor, and of policy in our character of besiegers, would have prevented a loss of about eight hundred and fifty to ourselves, and something more to the French.

'The battle of Toulouse will have given a bright close to the career of Lord Wellington. It appears to have been one of the most hardly-contested actions of the whole war.'[1]

'Biarritz: May 1, 1814.

'Our governor has at length condescended to do like the rest of the world, and the white standard has displaced the tricolour upon the walls of the citadel. Everything is now settled at Bayonne, although the form of a blockade is still continued on our part, and it is only by particular favour that we can gain admittance into the town. I went in yesterday chiefly for the purpose of seeing my poor friend Herries. I found him as I expected—much reduced but easy, and his wound doing remarkably well since the amputation. He assured me he was quite reconciled; and I believe him, for he has a mind full of resource. He made me ashamed of my unphilosophic way of looking at things; but I trust I shall be less irritable should the case ever apply to myself.

'I am in hopes I shall have frequent opportunities of getting into Bayonne; he has liberty to leave it, but he is so well taken care of that he is not at all impatient.

'I am just returned from attending a very pleasant ceremony performed this morning in the church of this village, and in village pomp—the thanksgiving for the restoration of Louis XVIII. The white banner consecrated, and the names of Henri Quatre, and the long line of kings pronounced with rapture from the pulpit, was quite to my taste. The people are all delighted at the change, the army alone are sulky; and upon my word those who take only a na .ow view of their

[1] The battle of Toulouse was fought on April 10, when a general attack upon the town was made by the Allies. At its close the Allied troops were established on three sides of Toulouse, and arrangements were made for a further advance; but on the night of the 11th the French retired, leaving three generals and 1,600 men prisoners. The total loss of the Allies was 600 killed and 4,000 wounded. The following day Lord Wellington entered Toulouse, and the Bourbon white flag was hoisted. It was not till the following day, the 13th, that Col. Cooke brought to Lord Wellington intelligence of the events which had occurred in Paris on the 7th. Hostilities were not, however, actually suspended till the 17th.

own interests may have some reason. We have not a small portion among our own people of the same description, who lament deeply the fall of "their best friend," as he was called. We have two or three mails due from England; I wish they would arrive. We understand that Louis XVIII. was in London so late as the 16th. The people are very anxious to hear that Bonaparte is safely landed, and fast chained in the Isle of Elba. I wonder they did not fix upon Stromboli for his abode; the man and the mountain would faithfully represent each other, and the stormy elements of the moral and physical natures would harmonise in a way worthy the attention of poets and philosophers.

'They give us no hint about embarkation yet. I shall try to make a tour by Toulouse and Bordeaux before I see you.'

'Biarritz: May 15, 1814.

'I received your letter of the 25th of last month, enclosing one from Henry several days ago, and thank you for the interesting account you give me of the reception of the King of France in London. I hope his *entrée* since into his own capital has been attended with greetings still more enthusiastic. Henry's account of himself is tolerably good, although he confesses he is not quite up to all the gaieties with which you would, among you, seduce him. He must have learnt by this time that his regiment is embarked, and, I believe, has sailed for Canada. I hope, however, he will not be in any hurry to join them. My own regiment, and about twenty others, are, I believe, going to overwhelm the States. I should be well pleased to accompany them on the staff if I did not think that everything would be settled with America before they arrive there, and I had rather be spared the mere voyage. . . . They do not yet begin to talk of embarking us. I should think, though, it could not be delayed long.[1] . . .'

[1] At the end of March the Allied armies had entered Paris, and on April 6 Napoleon had abdicated, and had selected the island of Elba as the place of his retreat. On April 13 Monsieur, the brother of Louis, had entered Paris in state, and on the 23rd he ratified with the Allied Powers a convention for the

'Biarritz: May 23, 1814.

'I am going to try an experiment in sending this by way of Paris. I think it is likely to make the journey quicker than going by the high seas.[1]

'Poor General Benson! His unexpected death, though it hardly ought to have been so, will deprive me of one of the greatest pleasures I had promised myself on my return to England; for there are many questions on which I am sure he would have been curious, and on some of them I should have been able to give him the information he required.

'Lord Wellington passed through Bayonne last Thursday, on his way to Madrid; he proposes being with us again in about three weeks.

'Sir John Hope[2] (I cannot help calling people by their old names you see!) and Herries are embarked, but the vessel has not yet been able to get over the bar, owing to the perverseness of the wind. Herries is doing as well as possible.

suspension of all hostilities. On the following day Louis XVIII. crossed the Channel and landed at Calais, and on May 3 made his solemn entrance into the capital; the same day witnessed the arrival of the dethroned Emperor at his island in an English frigate. The formal treaty of peace between France and the Allied Powers—Austria, Russia, Great Britain, and Prussia—was proclaimed at Paris on May 31, an article binding the Powers engaged in the late war to send within two months plenipotentiaries to Vienna, in order to regulate in a general congress the arrangements for completing the dispositions of the treaty. The causeless and unhappy war in America alone continued; and in order to prosecute it with increased energy, a considerable number of the English troops which had been engaged in the Peninsular War were embarked at Bordeaux direct for America without even being allowed to return home; this was not concluded till the end of the year. Provision was made by Parliament for the Duke of Wellington, and on July 1 he made a formal visit to the House of Commons, and the Speaker read to him a congratulatory address. The treaty of peace was not communicated to the Houses of Parliament till July 28. Thus the great war seemed to have come to a complete conclusion. There is no instance in modern history of the termination of a long war by a treaty which was so generally approved as this was. The long protraction and excessive burdens of the war had rendered all impatient to see its close, and the announcement was hailed with universal pleasure.

[1] The post mark shows the letter reached England on June 2.

[2] Sir John Hope, G.C.B., colonel of the 42nd Regiment, had for his gallant achievements in the war been elevated to the peerage by the title of Baron Niddry He afterwards, in 1817, on the death of his half-brother, succeeded to the Earldom of Hopetoun.

'They have sent us out our Vittoria clasps. I am longing for the St. Sebastian cross to make its appearance, for mine is a very gaudy trinket as it stands at present, and requires a little consolidating.'

'Biarritz: June 12, 1814.

'The army is embarking; we expect our turn will come about July 1. We are then to start from Passages. We are passing a stupid time of it *en attendant*. I wished to go to Bordeaux for a fortnight; but my General is unaccommodating, and tells me I might as well think of going to Nova Zembla, although there is nothing—positively nothing—to do. . . .'

'Biarritz: June 23, 1814.

'. . . I suppose the troops here will be embarking in about a fortnight; there is but little chance, I am afraid, of their point of embarkation being changed to Bordeaux, and as my crusty chieftain is determined to keep me at his elbow till they do embark, I shall probably go up to Bordeaux after seeing them off at Passages, and very likely be in England before them; for the voyage from Passages is generally long.'

'Bordeaux: July 11, 1814.

'I think I shall surprise you with a letter from Bordeaux, having given you in my last letters such little reason to expect I should ever be able to make my escape from Biarritz until the period of transportation arrived; however, my General, who is a very kind, good man, began at last to think we were leading a very sluggish life; and, as you did not seem to be in a hurry to send for us from England, he gave me leave to do as I pleased. I have, therefore, been here five days, and am much pleased with the place. The town is very large and handsome; there are a number of fine private houses in it; but, excepting the cathedral and the theatre, which is one of the finest pieces of architecture in Europe, it contains no public buildings that can pass for sights. The Garonne is magnificent, and at this moment crowded with shipping. I am

fortunate in the time of my arrival; for, although the days of feasting and rejoicing are over, the return of the Duc d'Angoulême, who is on his way to Toulon, has set the town alive for me. They appear really very glad to see him, and cry "Vive le Roi!" with all their hearts. I have also found a great treat in the theatre: there are two performers playing here at present who cut a figure on the Parisian stage—a M. Joanny and Mdlle. Georges, who, if not the most excellent, seems to be by far the most notorious actress they have, owing to her intimacy with Bonaparte when he played the part of Emperor. She is a very large, handsome woman, and rants divinely; but when she forgets to rant, I think she is sometimes as fine. The other night I thought she was sometimes quite the Phèdre Racine imagined; and at others, and much oftener, a raving madwoman with a strong voice, railing at all the men and women perched up at the top of the house. I shall, notwithstanding, go to see her as often as she chooses to play. I shall remain here till there is a probability of our embarking; I shall then, I believe, be obliged to return to Bayonne.'

'Hôtel de Valois, Rue de Richelieu, Paris: August 5, 1814.

'We reached Paris only the day before yesterday. Babylon the great surpasses hitherto in every respect the idea I had formed of it. You cannot expect any details from me in this letter respecting Paris; and although I feel, while sitting down to write, as if I had a volume to tell you, I should feel also, if I began, as if I were describing to you a magnificent dream that had held me in enchantment for several days and nights; and I am anxious to see more before I can write with the confidence of a person who is conscious that he is describing realities and not phantoms of the brain.

'Our journey through the country was delightful; we passed through some of the most beautiful and, to an Englishman, certainly the most interesting provinces of France. The Touraine is called the Garden of France. The whole course of the Loire, from Tours to Orleans, is one scene of delight.

Poictiers, Blois, Orleans, need only be named to excite in us proud recollections, and recall most interesting periods in the history of modern Europe; and the impression is naturally more lively when visiting these places.

'Our visit to the Castle of Blois was romantic enough. We could only arrive in time to carry it into execution by moonlight; but the sombre majesty of the building, and the high story connected with it, render it at least as fit an object to be contemplated by moonlight as old Melrose. We have been by no means idle since our arrival here. We have established ourselves in an *hôtel garni* for a guinea and a half a week each; this, considering that we are in the best part of the town and the most convenient for our purposes, is not very ruinous.

'We yesterday took a general survey of the Louvre, or the Palace of Armida—I hardly know which; we go there again in half an hour, and when I write again I shall tell you more about it. I have been twice to the Théâtre Français; the Opera, I understand, is the most splendid spectacle in Paris, but I confess I should have done a violence to my inclinations had I not paid my first tribute of respect to the other. Last night they gave "Les Horaces." Duchênois played Camille divinely; and although the other characters were generally well supported, and sometimes admirably (particularly that of old Horace by St. Prix), and the third and fourth acts even with great spirit, one cannot help thinking upon what might have been. Talma is absent, and I much fear will not return before I leave Paris; judge my despair.

'I called upon Sir Charles Stuart immediately, and I dine with him to-day. Henry talks of going out to America immediately; I hope something will occur to prevent him. I think he will be very, very wrong.' . . .

'Paris: August 18, 1814.

'. . . It is lucky that I had determined to remain in Paris till the end of the month, or I should probably have lost the opportunity of seeing Henry altogether; for I propose going

to Calais by the way of Valenciennes and Lille, and, should he have followed his plan of leaving London immediately, I may expect him to drop in every hour.

'He gives me a very agreeable piece of intelligence—I mean the chance of my getting a lieutenant-colonelcy in the Guards. I own I am rather anxious about it since I received his letter, for I am not very well pleased with my situation in the 9th; the return of the unfortunate major who had been so long prisoner in France has thrown me sadly into the back-ground. At all events, whether I succeed in this instance or not, the Duke of York's kind intentions towards me are sufficiently manifested.

'I was presented last Monday at the Court by Sir Charles Stuart. The Royal Family appear to give great satisfaction among all ranks. I should think the King and Duchess d'Angoulême would gain in the affections of the people every day.'

'Paris: August 26, 1814.

'I hope to be with you before the 3rd or 4th September. I begin to grow very anxious to set footing once more upon English ground, and I need not tell you with what alacrity, I shall make my way to John Street when once on *terra firma.*

'Pray thank my friends for their congratulations whenever you have an opportunity. The Duke of York's tenderness to me on this as on every other occasion almost exceeds belief. I think I shall be allowed to spend a few weeks with you previous to joining my battalion, and upon these conditions I shall be delighted with my new quarters.'

CHAPTER XVI.

1815.

KNIGHT COMMANDER OF THE BATH—NAPOLEON'S ESCAPE FROM ELBA—BRUSSELS—APPOINTED TO STAFF—QUARTERMASTER-GENERAL OF 5TH PICTON'S DIVISION—QUATRE BRAS—WATERLOO—DIARY OF THE CAMPAIGN AND MARCH TO PARIS NOTE ON THE DIARY WRITTEN FIFTY YEARS AFTERWARDS—WATERLOO JOTTINGS—ON CLAIMS OF 52ND REGIMENT TO HAVE REPULSED THE IMPERIAL GUARD—DEATH OF HIS BROTHER AND SISTER—FINIS.

THE beginning of the new year brought to Colonel Gomm an unexpected distinction and title, but certainly well merited by his good service in so many campaigns.

It may well excite the envy of many in these quieter days to see the young officer of thirty years of age, his breast covered with medals and clasps, who, having begun in a line regiment, was now lieutenant-colonel in the Coldstream Guards,[1] and a Knight Commander of the newly reorganised Order of the Bath.

The year 1815 opened in what appeared to be perfect peace throughout the civilised world, the treaty with America having been signed at Ghent before Christmas; and it seemed as if the household brigade to which Sir William Gomm now belonged would have nothing more startling to perform than the suppression of London riots, which chiefly consisted in small parties of roughs who went about the streets shouting for the Corn Bill, and smashing the windows of such of the Ministry as they conceived to be hostile to their cause. This domestic bickering was, however, promptly silenced by the startling

[1] In the London *Gazette* of August 13, 1814: To be captain of a company and lieutenant-colonel in the Coldstream Regiment of Foot Guards, Lieutenant-Colonel William Gomm, from the 9th Foot. Dated July 25, 1814.

Engraved by Joseph Brown, Print & Miniature painted 1814 1815 in the possession of Lt Carr Comm.

Your

affectionate Brother

Wm Brown

AET 30

news, early in March, that Napoleon had escaped from Elba. He landed at Cannes on the 1st with a handful of one thousand men, and England, Austria, Prussia, and Russia immediately formed an alliance against him. On March 20 he entered Paris, which Louis XVIII. had left on the previous day. During April there were discussions as to the policy to be pursued by the Allies; and finally, after a debate in the House of Commons, the justice of forcibly dispossessing him of the power he had usurped was affirmed by a majority of the House voting in favour of the war policy, which had already been ratified by the plenipotentaries of the Allies at Vienna. By this time Napoleon had been, by means of a military conspiracy, accepted by the French nation, and the grand conflict was now at hand, its scene Belgium and the Low Countries, the old battlefield of Europe. From the time of the first alarm reinforcements had been pouring in from England and Prussia, and at the end of May the Duke of Wellington arrived to take the supreme command of the Allied armies. The Coldstreams were among the first of the household brigade who went over, and Sir William Gomm's first letter to his sister is dated Ostend, May 5, 1815. It is merely to report his safe crossing. In it he says: 'Tell aunt that Thomas delivered me Sir Henry Torrens's note on my arrival at Ramsgate with the seal for the Duke. This will procure me an interview with his Grace at least.'

'Brussels: May 15, 1815.

'I was in hopes of being able to tell you something decisive relative to the staff. I have been intriguing violently for the last week, but, although things are at this moment in the best trim possible, I am not without alarms. My pretensions are allowed their full weight on all hands, and if I am not sacrificed to some late resolutions levelled against the overalls I shall succeed, I think. Others have obtained a revocation of the edict in their favour, and I do not despair.

'The Duke received me very graciously on my presenting him his insignia of the Bath. He is in excellent spirits. I

shall remain here three or four days, and then proceed to Enghien if nothing is decided by that time. I find my journey has agreed with me. The weather has been, and continues, delightful. I am getting into working condition very fast.'

'Brussels: May 25, 1815.

'You will be glad to hear that I have succeeded in my application for the staff. The Duke of Wellington appointed me yesterday an assistant quartermaster-general, and although it still requires the Duke of York's sanction, I consider myself as firmly seated. I must explain to you why I say although. When the staff of this army was first formed, the Duke of Wellington sent home my name with a particular recommendation; but it was rejected with several others, because we got into the Guards. However, I suppose they have thought better of it since at home, for every one of those at present in the country situated like myself has been appointed notwithstanding the prohibition, and I am now again recommended in consequence of a fresh application from the quartermaster-general, although Lord Wellington was informed, certainly by mistake, that I had received the Duke's refusal in person before I left London. So, you see, I have had some difficulties arising from situation to contend with besides the competition of others, and nothing but my eternal presence here, and particularly at this moment, would, I believe, have effected it at last. All that the Duke of Wellington has done about it, however, is very flattering to me. I am not yet attached to any division, but shall be immediately. In the meantime I stay here. If the Dawkins' look glum at you the next time you encounter them lay it to my account, for I am afraid I arrived just in time to cut out the Colonel; but I declare I hope his turn will come next, and perhaps this is all that can be expected from flesh and blood nowadays.'

To his Aunt.

'Brussels: May 29, 1815.

'I am not yet attached to any division, but the 5th and 6th are forming, and I shall probably be with one of those.

'Brussels is very full, and we have no indications of an immediate move. The Duke reviews the cavalry to-day in the neighbourhood of Grammont. It will be a fine military spectacle, and it has cost me something to keep out of the way; but the distance is twenty miles, the day hot, and my horses wanting rest. Blucher is there. I have not been able to learn whether M. de Clausewitz is with him. Should he return by Brussels I will ascertain this, and see him if possible.

'I am not sure whether I have yet told you that the Duke is living in my old quarters, so that you see I made not a bad choice. I am now living at the Comte d'Alegambie's, and, if possible, better off than before.'

'Brussels: June 13, 1815.

. . . 'Since I last wrote to you I have been attached to the 5th Division (Picton's); it is not certain, however, that I shall continue with it. This, however, secures me a place in the world, whenever the army moves.

'I have also dined with Sir Charles Stuart, and had a visit from Richard since I wrote, two events hardly to be looked for at this hour. Richard is quartered at Ath in charge of money, very little bodily exertion required of him, and therefore highly pleased with his post. I am so pleasantly lodged here that I shall be well contented to remain in Brussels till the campaign opens; but I fear we shall be pushed forward in a few days by troops arriving from England.

'You make tender inquiries after my nags; they are both well, and I have added another to the family since I came here.

'I hope Henry receives benefit from the pure air of Brighton. I am afraid your excursion may be costing you some money, but if aunt does not draw upon Biddulph for fifty pounds of mine which are always lying in his drawers it is her own fault: tell her so. I hope I shall very soon have more at her disposal, either there or at Greenwood's.'

No other letter was written for six days, and during those

six days what memorable events happened! As this last letter of the 13th was being written Napoleon was fast nearing Belgium; on the 15th he crossed the frontier; on the 16th the battles of Ligny and Quatre Bras were fought, and on the 18th the battle of Waterloo. How different from the letter of the 13th June, with its comfortable quarters and 'nothing immediately stirring' is the following most interesting letter to his sister, written upon that ever memorable field, while so sleepy and tired out that he could hardly write, were it not for the magnificence of his theme, and his constant solicitude for the happiness of his dear ones at home.

'Camp of Waterloo, June 19, 1815.

'I know what satisfaction it will give you to learn that I have been with the 5th Division, and, therefore, in the hottest of all this "glorious business," and have escaped with two blows which are of no consequence, and two horses wounded which is of great consequence.

'The Prussians are marching upon Charleroi, and we move upon Nivelles immediately.

'I consider the French army as utterly destroyed, and we shall be in Paris as fast as our legs can carry us. Tell Aunt so, and recommend her to leave off croaking. I am writing this unintelligibly enough, but it would be still worse by word of mouth at this moment, for I am so hoarse at hurraing all yesterday, that I can scarcely articulate.

'I have been four days without washing face or hands, but am in hourly expectation of my lavender water, etc. I am very tired. Adieu, dear Sophia; I hope this will reach you early, for I well know how anxious you all will be about me. Best love to aunt, Henry, Goully, and all friends. I am much afraid dear Goully will be called upon to illuminate ruinously on this occasion. We have done nothing like it since Blenheim, and the consequences are likely to be far more important. Adieu once more. Ever your affectionate brother,

'W. M. Gomm.'

The following is Sir William's diary of the events of that time, written while actually on the march to Paris. It is headed 'Journal of the Operations, etc.'

'*Journal of the Operations of the Army under the Duke of Wellington, from June* 15 *to August* 8, 1815.[1]

'DURING the night of the 15th the four divisions of the army, covering the frontier from Mons to Ypres, and beyond these fortresses, receive orders to concentrate about their respective

[1] 'This sketchy and sadly rusty-looking memoir, long lain to rest, and evoked now only by the fanfaronnades recently put forth for the dreamy consolation of compatriots and the grave amusement of all the world beside, by those consummate masters of fiction, Messieurs Victor Hugo and Thiers, was drawn up or out literally on the march from Waterloo to Paris; anticipating, therefore, any possibility of comparison or check from other sources of information, English, French, Prussian or Belgian. And it was satisfactory, I recollect, at the time, as opportunity presented itself for putting the narrative to the proof by reference to other documents bearing upon the same weighty matter, to find, that in all important details upon which it touches, it was not 'exaggerating' in the heat of exultation, nor 'setting down aught in malice,' and was at mortal variance only with such versions as have provoked it to break its rest in the present instance.

'It will be readily perceived that such detail as the report enters into is limited chiefly to the fortunes of our left of the field—the French right—for the very sufficient reason that what occurred in this quarter passed under the immediate eye of the narrator; the rest gathered, of necessity, from competent and trustworthy authorities, likewise personally engaged; and pencil corrections (and here entered as footnotes), for the most part unimportant, will be observed here and there in the course of perusal.

'But the great attack of infantry on our left, covered by eighty pieces of cannon, and consisting of d'Erlon's corps of 20,000 men, which Bonaparte meant and fully expected to be as decisive of the fate of the day as Soult's 20,000 launched against the Prusso-Austrian centre at Austerlitz, passed in the immediate gaze of the Quartermaster-General of the British division (the 5th), and assailed the three solid masses advancing (as reported in the narrative) in direct échelon of columns from their left (Durutte's division, the 4th, diverged to the attack of the hamlets of La Haye and Papellotte); and a mounted officer so disengaged from local association with any particular section of our line had the rare opportunity afforded him of presenting himself at the repulse of each of the three French columns in succession, as recorded in the narrative; and this repulse amounted to nothing short of the utter discomfiture of some 15,000 French infantry, bearing forward renowned eagles over their heads, and burning for a first meeting with us, by not more than 3,601 English, the numbers to which the two British Brigades of the division who marched out of Brussels in the dawn of the 16th 5,170 strong, were reduced by its conflicts before the close of that day at Quatre Bras.

'And truly, the collective British cheer effected more than the levelled bayonet

head-quarters, at Oudenarde, Grammont, Enghien, Hal, and the cavalry at Ninove; but the whole wait further orders for moving.

'Information of the French army having forced the passage of the Sambre at Charleroi, on the 14th, reached the British head-quarters at Brussels only on the evening of the 15th.

'The garrison of Brussels — consisting of two British brigades of the 5th Division, the 81st Regiment, brigade of Hanoverian militia of the 6th Division, Duke of Brunswick's corps, Nassau troops—assemble during the night and march at five o'clock next morning on the Charleroi road, halting for two hours in the Bois de Soignies, at Waterloo.

'*June* 16.—At one o'clock P.M. move on through Genappe to Quatre Bras, a post at which the roads from Brussels to Namur and Charleroi divide; the road from Namur to Nivelles also strikes off from the Brussels road at this point, which the enemy had gained possession of the preceding day, but which had been re-occupied by the troops of Orange Nassau in the course of the morning, and by a Belgic brigade, under the Prince of Weimar.

of such scanty numbers for sending the swarming assailants to the right-about, as described; and the staggering surprise of Marcognet's column (the 3rd) at the moment of the plumage of the heavy cavalry topping the ridge in their face, while the 42nd and 92nd Highlanders were holding them at bay bordering the Ohain road, springs up freshly to my vision while I write, and the shoutings that struck home into the heart of the bewildered masses are ringing in my ear afresh.

'As for the malformation of d'Erlon's columns of attack, chansoned over by Thiers and others, accounting for their misfortune, it is all fable; best accounted for by the Duke in his letter to Marshal Beresford:—"The French attacked us in the old style—in column—and were driven off in the old style."

'As for Victor Hugo's monstrous *chemin creux d'Ohain*, and its train of catastrophes, there was no *creux* in the whole extent of it, save the sandpit at its junction with the main Namur road, into which the cuirassiers were handsomely tumbled, heels over head, by our Life Guards.

'And what shall be said of Thiers' ranting account of the exploits of the French Guard, and Victor Hugo's shameful one?

'Both columns were paralysed, and both were beaten back with all their honours of a host of fields, by the indomitable valour of our own Guard, and that of their worthy co-operators, not all English, to right and left.

'What a course of exploit to vilify, as these French writers, and others before them, have not scrupled to do!'—*Note written by Sir William Gomm in November* 1862.

'The enemy is in force about the village of Frasne, half a league in advance, on the Charleroi road.

'In the meantime the 1st and 2nd Corps of the army and the cavalry are marching upon Quatre Bras, it being sufficiently ascertained that the enemy is making his principal attack in this direction, and not on the side of Mons as was at first apprehended.

'Two brigades of the 4th Division, and one brigade of Hanoverians, are posted at Hal, to counteract the movements of a body of cavalry the enemy had detached in that direction, threatening our right flank.

'The troops from Brussels arrive at Quatre Bras about half-past three P.M.

'The enemy immediately makes a disposition for attack, with the 1st and 2nd Corps, under Ney, and a numerous cavalry under Kellerman.

'The British and Hanoverian brigades draw up in two lines along the chaussée leading from Quatre Bras to Namur; the Brunswick infantry to the right of Quatre Bras, a small portion of light troops occupying the head of the Bois de Bossu, in their front. This wood was in some parts intricate, but passable everywhere for light cavalry.

'The enemy cannonades the light troops and Belgicc avalry covering our front, and advances a body of infantry to take possession of the farmhouse of Gemioncourt and enclosures, on the great road, half-way between Les Quatre Bras and the village of Frasne. This post was defended by some of the troops of Orange Nassau, which were soon driven from it by the enemy.

'The Duke of Wellington had directed, when the enemy was making his first disposition for attack, that this house and the enclosures about it should be immediately occupied by a British regiment, judging it of great importance to the position that it should be held. The regiment destined for this service was otherwise disposed of, and the 28th Regiment (marched down too late to establish itself there) was withdrawn and formed the right of our position at Quatre Bras.

The relinquishing of this house and enclosures forms a principal feature in the detail of this day's operations, since without the entire possession of it and of the Bois de Bossu, of which the enemy possessed himself at the same time, and with equal facility, his cavalry would have been held in check the whole of the day, and his infantry have been prevented from assuming the offensive so securely as it did. But our force was, during several hours, very inferior to that of the enemy, ill composed, and inadequate to the proper occupation of the whole position.

'The enemy having established himself in the post of Gemioncourt, advances his infantry, under favour of the copse and enclosures, to attack our position upon the Namur road, between Les Quatre Bras and a wood on our extreme left, occupied by the 95th Regiment. His attacks are vigorous and repeated, carried on by columns of infantry, covered by a numerous body of light troops; but they are sustained with firmness by the two British brigades, under Generals Kempt and Pack. A heavy cannonade is kept up by both parties during these operations, which continues for about an hour and a half, when the enemy, who had hitherto made no impression upon our post, availing himself of his great superiority in cavalry (his light troops having possessed themselves of the Bois de Bossu), pushes a strong column of cuirassiers and lancers with rapidity up the great road, disperses the Brunswick and Belgic cavalry, gets possession of the post of Quatre Bras, and turns the right of the British position; but the enemy's cavalry is at this moment assailed with so galling and destructive a fire from the 92nd and Hanoverian regiments posted behind a bank on the left of Quatre Bras, that they are driven back in great confusion and with considerable loss. It was in the early part of this charge, made by the enemy, that the Duke of Brunswick fell.

'About six o'clock the 1st Corps, composed of the 1st and 3rd Divisions, reinforce the line; the 1st Division occupied in regaining possession of the Bois de Bossu; the 3rd strengthening our left, and relieving in their post several of our battalions, which had suffered considerably, or exhausted their ammunition,

This was the situation of many regiments on the arrival of the reinforcement, and the enemy was observed preparing for a fresh attack, which was again repulsed, with the assistance of the troops newly arrived.

'The enemy's cavalry, repulsed from Quatre Bras by the heavy fire of musketry directed against it, reforms his columns, is supported by fresh reserves, and finding no cavalry on our side capable of holding him in check, renews his attack upon the great road, and threatens the infantry formed in line to the left of it. The infantry immediately forms squares by battalions; the 42nd Regiment, being much advanced, suffers greatly from the fire of the enemy's sharp-shooters in the enclosures of Gemioncourt, but repulses the charge of the cuirassiers.[1]

'The 28th Regiment, and a wing of the Royal, formed in square upon the causeway, and inaccessible (except by one front) to the approach of cavalry, are ordered by Sir Thomas Picton to march down into the plain and take in flank the enemy's cavalry which was making an impression on the great road.

'This square advances with shouts into the middle of the plain, halts within short musket range of the cavalry, and opens a fire upon it, charged repeatedly by the enemy's cuirassiers and lancers, who are repulsed in every onset. The lancers wound the men in the ranks, but are every time driven back with confusion and great loss.

'The 30th Regiment also moves down under the same form, flanks the square above mentioned, and receives with equal firmness the charge of the French cavalry.

'These attacks of cavalry upon the infantry are continued till dark, as well as the contest in the Bois de Bossu. At length the enemy withdraws from all his points of attack and resumes his position in front of Frasne. The Bois de Bossu

[1] The 42nd Regiment was charged by the cuirassiers while in the act of forming in square, but such was the firmness of the troops, that even in an irregular mass they repulsed the charge, and by the time the second attack was made upon them order was re-established.

and post of Gemioncourt are strongly occupied by British troops; the cannonade continues till after dark.

'A heavy cannonade heard on our left the whole afternoon. The Prussians warmly engaged till long after dark.

'The British cavalry arrives upon the ground at nightfall, having made a long and very rapid march.

'The two British brigades of the 5th Division lose on this day 120 officers and 1,400 men.[1] The brunt of the action fell upon them.

'The enemy attacked were the 1st and 2nd Corps, under Ney and D'Erlon, and the cavalry under Kellerman.[2]

'Bonaparte directed the attack upon the Prussians, who held their ground with obstinacy, but are at length obliged to retire upon Wavre.

'The whole of the British force, engaged for nearly two hours, did not exceed 4,000 men.

'The two armies remain in presence till 2 o'clock, P.M., but the British commences retiring its stores, etc., upon the Brussels road earlier. By two the whole army is in movement, covered by the cavalry. The enemy shows no disposition to advance till the whole have moved off. In the course of the retreat the enemy makes several charges upon our cavalry with various success. Our cavalry is pressed by that of the enemy towards the close of the day.

'The army takes up a position across the great roads leading from Charleroi and Nivelles to Brussels.

'No baggage, stores, or wounded fall into the enemy's hands during the retreat.

'A violent storm comes on while the army is taking up its position, and heavy rain continues the whole of the night and following morning till near mid-day.

'The position of the army on June 18 was as follows:—On the left, the 2nd Division of the army of the Netherlands, extending from the Charleroi road, in front of a lane[3] leading

[1] 1,569, by returns since collected.

[2] Incorrect information at the moment—the 1st Corps under d'Erlon were kept marching and counter-marching the whole day.

[3] Road from Nivelles to Ohain.

to the village of Smohain and the hamlet of La Haye; the two British brigades of the 5th Division in second line, behind the lane, its right resting upon the Chaussée, its left crowning a height behind La Haye; the Hanoverian brigade, 5th Division, which had joined us from Hal, and that of the 6th Division, formed in column on the left of the height, ready to act in any direction; the Netherland troops extending along our front to the hamlet La Haye, which was occupied; the hussar brigade encamped at some distance in rear of our left, near Ter La Haye. This formed the extreme left of the position, and the cavalry communicated by patrols with the Prussians at Wavre, distant about two leagues and a half.

'Two brigades of artillery covered the front of this part of the position, and a troop of horse artillery took post upon a knoll in front of our right flank, above the farmhouse of La Haye Sainte.

'To the right of the great road lay the 1st and 3rd Divisions, the Brunswick Corps, the 2nd Corps of the army, and a large proportion of the cavalry and artillery. Their position extended in two lines in rear of the house and wood of Hougoumont, making an angle at that point, the extreme right retiring upon a ravine near Merbe Braine.

'The posts of Hougoumont and Merbe Braine were occupied.

'The whole front of the position covered a space of about two miles and a half.

'17.—The enemy takes post in our front, a little before dark, upon the heights above Planchenoit, and cannonades the rear of our column; but his guns are silenced by the superior fire of the battery above La Haye Sainte.

'The British position, such as it has been described, although not defective, was not naturally strong, and was in no part intrenched; that of the enemy was more commanding.

'About mid-day, on the 18th, the enemy commences a sharp skirmish about the house and copse of Hougoumont, and advances his infantry, supported by several batteries of artillery, to take possession of that post; but the 1st Brigade of Guards, under General Byng, and the troops of the German

Legion, belonging to the 3rd Division, repulse every effort made by him.

'About 2 o'clock the enemy forms a battery of from twenty to thirty pieces of cannon, extending along the whole front of our line, from La Haye Sainte to the height above Smohain, and, under the protection of its heavy fire, three solid masses of infantry, composed of the 1st and 2nd Corps, under Ney and D'Erlon, advance with rapidity across the gentle ravine that separates the two positions, his left column directing its attack upon the great road, the other two between the great road and height which formed our left.[1] The horse artillery are forced to withdraw their guns after having done dreadful execution against the enemy's column advancing along the road and to our immediate left of it. The 95th, light troops, and skirmishers are forced to withdraw before the French column, which reaches the top of our position in compact order, the head of it crossing the lane along which our line[2] had been originally formed. At this moment the 32nd and 79th Regiments, posted on our right, which had retired some paces, and which had hitherto kept up a destructive fire upon the enemy's column without seeming to shake it, advanced to the charge with shouts. The column hesitates, turns, and breaks, hurrying in disorder down the hill.

'It was during this charge that Sir Thomas Picton fell.

'Throughout the whole of this operation, General Kempt's brigade was formed in one line without any reserve, owing to the weakness of our force in this quarter, and under these circumstances it charged the enemy's column, which had gained the height of our position in compact order.

'The centre column advanced with the same success, and was routed in like manner by the left of General Kempt's and right of General Pack's brigade, consisting of the 44th Royal and 28th Regiments.

'The enemy's[3] right column forced the Netherland troops

[1] This attack was made by the 1st Corps under d'Erlon. The 3rd was with Grouchy.—W. M. G.

[2] Of the 5th Division.

[3] Third column, Durutte's; the 4th was directed against La Haye, etc.

back in confusion; afterwards the Hanoverian brigade, which had lined the hedge on our side of the lane. The enemy's column reaches the opposite hedge. The 42nd line the hedge the Hanoverians had just quitted. The 92nd (also in line) outflanks the column by its right. The heaviness of the fire concentrated upon it causes it to halt and waver. The heavy brigade of cavalry, consisting of the Greys, Inniskillen, and 1st Dragoons, charge at this moment, break through the column, disperse it with great slaughter, and disperse themselves in the eagerness of pursuit; suffer greatly from the enemy's cannon, and are themselves charged by the cuirassiers in compact order.

'General Ponsonby killed in this charge. Upwards of two thousand prisoners made by the cavalry.

'Immediately after the repulse of this attack, General Lambert's brigade of the 6th Division reinforces the right of our position,[1] and covers the point of La Haye Sainte on the great road.

'The attack is all along carried on with obstinacy against the post of Hougoumont.

'At 3 P.M. the enemy advances the whole of his cavalry to the attack of the great road and position to the right of it.

'The cavalry supported by heavy columns of infantry. The enemy gains possession of La Haye Sainte and Hougoumont.[2]

'The British cavalry forced back by that of the enemy. The infantry forms in squares upon the position; charged repeatedly by the enemy's cuirassiers, lancers, and light cavalry, who are repulsed in every charge, and forced at length to retire from the plateau, having suffered immensely.

'The columns of French infantry are also checked in their advance by the continued and heavy fire of musketry kept up by the British line, which was again deployed upon the retreat of the enemy's cavalry; the infantry retire behind the ridge and woods of Hougoumont, still retaining possession of that post,

[1] Again, 5th Division must be understood.

[2] False information, the enemy never possessed Hougoumont.—W. M. G.

as well as of La Haye Sainte, which had long been contested, and obstinately defended by a party of the light battalion of the German Legion, under Colonel Baring, till at length, their ammunition exhausted, and all communication with their supplies cut off, they were forced to give up the post to the enemy, who immediately occupied it in force, and formed several heavy masses of infantry and a body of cavalry under cover of it, preparatory to a fresh attack.

'The possession of La Haye Sainte, and of the knoll above it, on each side of the great road, enables the enemy to keep up a destructive fire of musketry upon the troops posted for the defence of this important part of the line. The brigade of the 6th Division, under General Lambert, render essential service in this quarter. The 5th Division has, during the last attack, made a movement to its right, and is formed in columns of battalions, near the great road—a heavy fire of musketry and artillery is kept up by the enemy in this direction, till at length he withdraws his cannon, and the fire of musketry slackens.

'About 5 o'clock in the afternoon, the Prussians are observed advancing upon the right flank of the enemy's position, but their firing is still distant.

'The Prussian columns had been put in motion at day-break from Wavre, directing their march upon Frischermont and Planchenoit, but the defile of St. Lambert had considerably retarded their advance, and although they had happily surmounted all obstacles, and were rapidly gaining ground upon the main position of the enemy, above Planchenoit by 7 o'clock, the third and desperate attack made upon the British line by the Imperial Guard had been completely repulsed and the enemy in total rout in our front before the Prussians had formed their junction with our left wing.

'It deserves to be stated, to the honour of the Prussian leader, that on learning, at an advanced period of the day, that the enemy had pushed a column by Wavre, threatening his rear, he expressed little concern, and took no precautionary measures, judging well that the fate of the day depended upon

the success of the operation he was conducting, and could be little influenced by the success of any detached corps.

'The enemy made his third attack about 7 o'clock. His heavy columns of infantry, urged on by numerous supports, broke down all opposition upon the great road, and upon the plateau to the right, advancing under cover of the posts of La Haye Sainte and Hougoumont, till he attained the summit of our position; but the British line waited his advance with firmness, pouring an incessant and exterminating fire into the heart of his columns. Brought to a stand, they soon began to waver; panic ensues, and complete rout is the immediate consequence. Cavalry and infantry hurry together in flight, while a murderous fire is directed upon the fugitives from every part of the line. The British cavalry make dreadful havoc among several hastily formed squares of infantry.

'One square [1] more compact, and composed of greater numbers than the others, stands in the middle of the plain for a considerable time, covering the retreat of the broken battalions, but, although inaccessible to the cavalry, it suffers immensely from the fire of artillery directed upon it from all points.

'At this moment the whole British line is advanced to the attack of the enemy's position above Planchenoit, and triumphantly carries height after height. All attempts on the part of the enemy to rally his broken army are vain. The Prussian columns are now acting in concert with the British, and the enemy's right is completely turned.

'The farm-house, named La Belle Alliance, upon the great road, was the point upon which the march of the Prussian army was chiefly directed; it was in the centre of the enemy's position, and was said to be the spot from which Napoleon directed the principal movements of his army.

'Before dark the Prussian columns had entered the great Charleroi road, and continued the pursuit of the enemy the whole night.

'The British army rested upon its arms for the night, a

[1] The second battalion of the Old Guard, held in reserve.

little beyond the position from which the enemy had been driven.

'The whole road between the field of battle and Genappe was strewed, so as to be rendered almost impassable, with the enemy's cannon and military stores—150 pieces of artillery, and more than 200 caissons were left close to the field.

'The loss of the British and Hanoverian army on this day amounted to thirteen thousand men; the Brunswick, Belgian, and Dutch corps also lost some thousands.

'The enemy's loss is rated at fifty thousand men.

'The allies brought about sixty thousand men into the field, the enemy upwards of one hundred thousand.[1]

The loss of the 5th British Division, on this occasion, amounted to one hundred officers, and one thousand two hundred men; its total loss, on both days, two hundred and twenty officers, and two thousand six hundred men, nearly the half of its force on leaving Brussels. The loss fell chiefly upon the British brigades.

'Many distinguished persons have fallen on the fields of Waterloo and Genappe whose fate is a public loss. The Duke of Brunswick, from his illustrious rank, the esteem in which he was held by the Allies, and the love borne him by his own corps, could not but claim the regret of all. Sir Thomas Picton was an officer of long approved merit, possessing great firmness and ability, experienced in service, before the opening of the Peninsular War, and since that period, constantly meriting and receiving the thanks of his country, for valuable services performed.

'Sir William Ponsonby, a character universally esteemed, and an able, though not a very experienced officer.

'But in no one instance has the army or the nation a greater loss to deplore than in that of the Deputy Quartermaster-General, Sir William De Lancey. He had served in the same capacity, under Sir George Murray, in every stage of the Peninsular War, and had performed the comprehensive duties

[1] Grouchy's force of 35,000 men must be deducted from this calculation, they having taken no part in the action.

of his station so much to the satisfaction of the Duke of Wellington, that on his resuming the command of the army, in Belgium, a very able officer[1] was removed from the head of the Quartermaster-General's Department to give place to Colonel De Lancey.

'He had hitherto been singularly fortunate in the field, and never wounded, though always much exposed. He possessed high military talent, which, united to many valuable and estimable qualities, and regulated by such experience, could not but constitute a character, whose departure from among us, in the vigour of life, should be deeply lamented through a wider circle than is comprised among the number of his relatives and friends.

'The Duke of Wellington was in the hottest of the fire during the whole of the action of the 18th; and as two hostile armies have seldom in modern warfare fought so continually hand to hand as on this hard contested day, so, perhaps, it has seldom happened that the superior officers of an army have been so much exposed, or so prodigal of their persons.

'There is a report that Napoleon led on the Imperial Guard to the charge in the last attack, but this report wants confirmation, and is not generally credited.

'The battle of Waterloo will claim so distinguished a place among the events of modern times, that it is perhaps the duty, as it is the pride, of everyone who had the good fortune to stand in the ranks of the Allied Army on that day to describe minutely and faithfully every particular incident that came more immediately under his own notice; and it will be found, upon the most exact scrutiny, to afford some of the most splendid examples of intrepidity and enthusiasm on the one hand, and of constancy and unshaken firmness on the other, that the world ever witnessed.

'It will be celebrated not less for the splendour of the achievements it gave opportunity to than for the magnitude of the results by which it was attended.

'All military observers—those who had been present at

[1] Sir Hudson Lowe.

Borodino, at Eylau, or at Austerlitz—declare that the contest was never so severe, the attacks never so impetuous, so reiterated, nor the resistance so obstinate; that the French never fought with such confidence, such assurance of victory, as on this day.

'The renown of their leader, their devotion to his cause, the promised plunder of Brussels almost within their grasp, everything contributed to stimulate them to exertion. Their composition was excellent; it was the flower of their army assembled to make this grand irruption into the Netherlands. Their cavalry was fine, both light and heavy-armed, numerous, and well equipped; their artillery magnificent; their infantry, the best soldiers of France, roused to emulation by the presence of the Imperial Guard.

'Lord Wellington's army, on the other hand (with the exception of the British part of it), was composed of new levies, which, however well disposed, could not from their inexperience be much depended upon. The Hanoverians (the legion excepted), all militia newly embodied. The Brunswick Corps, originally of ten thousand men, well equipped and ready to take the field at the moment they were called upon, had some experienced officers among them, who had served lately in Spain; but the corps was almost wholly composed of recruits.

'The Belgic and Dutch troops ill equipped, and in essential points still less efficient than the corps above named.

'The attempt made by Napoleon was therefore politic and well-timed, the conduct of the plan bold, and with a less fair prospect of success than might reasonably have been anticipated when a man of Bonaparte's fortunes and habits took the field against even the Duke of Wellington, it might have been called rash.

'The fortunes of the world seemed to have been set upon a cast. Had the Allies lost the battle of Waterloo, such was the nature of the conflict that utter ruin must have ensued. It was the peculiar characteristic of this battle from the beginning that the result must be decisive of the fate of both armies.

'The contest even merited more truly the title of a pitched battle. The fortunes of all the contending nations were, perhaps, at stake.

'Had Napoleon been triumphant at Waterloo, the spirit and conduct of the Prussian army would have availed it little, and the undisputed possession of Belgium would have enabled him to have opened the war against the armies of Austria and Russia with the same advantages, and probably with the same success, that had attended his earlier campaigns against those Powers.

'It has been observed that Napoleon manœuvred little in this battle.

'His great object seemed to be to overpower in some particular point. First, by the weight of his artillery and infantry in massy column; afterwards, with the whole of his cavalry; and, last of all, by a great, but fruitless, effort of his Imperial Guard.

'The result of this day's combinations, so fatal to the fortunes, ought not, perhaps, to detract from the military reputation of Napoleon; for as the history of the world has hitherto seldom, perhaps never, recorded an instance of such constancy as was displayed by the British infantry on this trying occasion, such opposition was not, upon the principles of human reasoning, justly to be looked for.

'Prodigies of valour disconcerted the plans which had so often led to success.

'The genius of the Duke of Wellington turned this undaunted spirit to the best account; but it was only by British soldiers that such a field could have been kept, animated by all the genius and daring of a Wellington.

'A just panegyric has been passed by public report upon the merits of the troops of all the nations engaged on the side of the Allies in this sanguinary conflict; but a close observer, who writes not for the public eye, will portion out the tribute of applause to each with nicer discrimination than policy might recommend under other circumstances; and it is not detracting from the merits of the troops of Hanover, Belgium, Brunswick,

or Holland, to declare that the field was more than once irretrievably lost but for the wonderful and almost miraculous exertions of the British infantry.

'All fought well, and on many occasions much better than could reasonably have been expected from troops of any nation so composed; but on this day the British infantry surpassed itself in constancy and intrepidity, and there were occasions when the exigency of the moment called for mightier efforts than had been looked for, even from British infantry, till this day. The exertions of the British cavalry were conspicuous, and no opportunity was lost of increasing the disaster of the enemy; but still the weight of the attack, both of cavalry and infantry, was borne by the latter. The enemy fought with an apparent determination to conquer—his cavalry above all; but as long as the days of Waterloo and Genappe[1] are upon record among the British infantry, the efforts of the best and most daring cavalry in the world, acting in situations the most favourable to that arm, against unconnected and unsupported battalions, will be held in contempt.

'The artillery on both sides did dreadful execution; ours on many occasions drew upon it the admiration of the enemy.

'The French infantry invariably attacked in solid column.

'This formation for attack seems calculated to produce decisive results.

'The Allies always received the assault of the columns in line, and as the British line never yielded, although the troops of other nations frequently broke and retired, the effect of musketry from a line concentrating upon a massy column at the distance of a few yards was most destructive. The columns once checked suffered immensely, and panic and flight were the inevitable consequences.

'It seems extraordinary that the fortunes of the day should have been so often retrieved by the sole efforts of British infantry, for there could not have been more than 25,000 British in the field, exclusive of cavalry and artillery.

'Whatever has been said respecting the comparative merits

[1] Quatre Bras.

of the Allies on the 18th is equally applicable to those engaged in the action of the 16th, a day not less glorious to the British infantry, although its celebrity will be lost in the splendour of the more decisive events which immediately followed. Yet those who were principally concerned in the operations of the 16th will always recollect with satisfaction that on this day, two brigades of the 5th Division—in all not more than 4,000 men—sustained the principal weight of an attack made by two corps[1] of the French army and a large body of cavalry, for several hours unsupported, except by Belgic, Brunswick, and Nassau troops; and without a squadron of British cavalry in the field till night. They notwithstanding repelled every attack with great slaughter of the enemy, particularly in cavalry.

'The three Highland regiments forming part of the 5th Division rendered essential services on this day, as well as on the 18th, and not only maintained, but exalted their high character.

'Perhaps the check the enemy received on the 16th in all his attempts had the salutary effect of heightening that confidence among the Allies, already great, which they manifested in so striking a manner on the 18th.

'The British infantry gave an earnest on the 16th of what might be expected from it in a future conflict, and it did not deceive either its enemies or friends.

'These comments upon the operations already detailed not being intended to be made public, have been given with freedom and candour, and wholly without reserve; and wherever an erroneous view of the magnificent but complicated events attempted to be described has been taken, it has proceeded from want of materials, or perhaps from want of opportunity or of capacity to form a better judgment—not from intention to detract from or panegyrise the merit of any party. Still, it is most gratifying to have to relate, however imperfectly, such exploits as, taken in the most unfavourable point of view, must redound more to the national honour, in a military sense, than

[1] The 1st Corps was not engaged.

any achievement of modern, or perhaps of ancient times, recorded in our annals.'

There are a great many letters and memoranda about Waterloo found amongst Sir William's papers, in many of which he records his personal experiences and reminiscences, or comments upon some of the published accounts or histories which have appeared from time to time.

Among others, an interesting correspondence was carried on between Canon Selwyn and Sir William Gomm about the claim of the 52nd Regiment to have had the honour of defeating without the assistance of the 1st British Guards, or of any other troops, that portion of the Imperial Guard of France, above 10,000 in number, which advanced to make the last attack upon the British position. Through some mistake or inadvertence the exploits of the 52nd Regiment at Waterloo were ignored in the original despatches, and the Guards had all the honours and rewards thrust upon them. On this point there have been voluminous and animated discussions in the public prints in which Colonel Chesney, General Lindsay, Mr. Leeke, and others took part; and although Sir William Gomm did not rush into print on so tempting a theme, there are many letters to and from him touching this still unsettled subject. Others in preparing histories of the campaign wrote to him for explanations and details, and his answers were invariably prompt and to the point. Major W. Siborne when writing his History of the Waterloo Campaign, and when preparing his famous Waterloo Model, which all visitors to London in the last generation went to see as one of the standard sights, wrote frequently to take advice on various details from Sir William Gomm.

The following is one of his memoranda on Mr. Leeke's pamphlets and letters:

'*Mr. Leeke's claim for the defeat of the French Imperial Guard at Waterloo by our 52nd Regiment singly, leaving only the herd of its preceding skirmishers to be satisfactorily dealt with by the 1st Brigade of Guards, considered.*

'It is a fact as firmly established before the world as that French and English faced each other on the field of Waterloo, that towards the close of that eventful day, Napoleon led in person a portion of his Guard, numbering between three and four thousand, down from its stand by "La Belle Alliance," towards the Chemin Creux on the Charleroi road, and from thence gave it over to Ney, with charge to lead it diagonally up the slope bordering upon the enclosures of "La Haie Sainte" towards the left centre of the British position.

'This mission of the estimated 4,000, I submit, should be regarded as the pivot round which all argument regarding what is called "The Crisis of Waterloo" should be made to turn.

'It is, then, hardly within the range of possibility that this column should have gone over to court a flank fire from any portion of Adam's Brigade, posted as it was, below and beyond the right flank of the brigade of Guards, in furtherance of its mission to assail our left centre.

'Yet this is the mode of proceeding of the French Guard so pertinaciously contended for by Mr. Leeke, for arriving at its end.

'But Mr. Leeke himself solves the question, by asserting, both in his letter to the "Army and Navy Gazette," in its issue of September 18, and in his preceding one to the same quarter, of March 28, 1868, that the column of Guards assailed by the 52nd amounted to something exceeding 10,000 men!

'It was, then, positively *not* the column estimated by Napoleon himself, and by Ney in his official report to Fouché, "Quatre régimens de vieille Garde, ou huit bataillons;" and Ney continues that he considered the strength at its starting inadequate to force the British position at the point indicated.

'But Mr. Leeke's statement with regard to numbers tallies

well with the official record of other six regiments of the Guard being assembled in the hollow between "La Belle Alliance" and the enclosures of Hougoumont, with a reserve of two; and with commission to advance towards the position of our line about to be assailed by the first column; and this second column it undoubtedly was with which the 52nd became *aux prises*, and which received such exemplary castigation at its hands, while delayed in its advance by the destructive fire of our artillery, by the steady presence in its front of the battalion of Guards which had already disposed of the right column, and possibly by some approach to consternation on witnessing the disorderly retreat of its comrades from that encounter.

'The 52nd, then, was mainly instrumental in the check and subsequent dispersion of this second heavy column; and it is therefore matter of regret that no special mention was made in the despatch of the signal services rendered by Adam's Brigade, and especially by the 52nd, in this crowning portion of the great encounter, furnishing occasion for the question said to have been put by Byng (I think) to Colborne, at Paris, "How will your fellows like our being given all the credit for what they did?"

'But to contend, as Mr. Leeke persistingly does, that the French attack by the Guard was made in one sole column, divided in its centre by an inappreciable interval, and that its overthrow was due to the prowess of the 52nd single-handed, is shown to be an absurdity by reference to authenticated numbers; and the twofold attack to be substantiated thereby; and Ney's column of some 4,000 at its outset—not 10,000 and upward, as conjectured by Mr. Leeke—left to make its own way, as originally directed for it, uphill, undisturbed, save by the shattering missiles of our artillery through its whole advance, and in a fashion worthy of its old renown, till reaching the crest of the position, to be precipitated from thence by the irresistible uprising of the 3rd Battalion of the 1st Regiment of Guards, seconded by the remnants of the right regiments of Colin Halkett's Brigade on its immediate left, 33rd and 69th, each of which had suffered so severely through earlier portions of the day.

'The Duke's direction, "Get up and drive those fellows off," so fondly dwelt upon by Mr. Leeke and his adherents, as affording presumptive evidence of the comparative insignificance of the pressure experienced by the Brigade of Guards in this last grand attack, was clearly applied to some intrusive skirmishers from Donzelot's corps, in and about La Haie Sainte, becoming more fidgetty and excursive, to engage our attention while the Guard was preparing its advance.

'On this whole subject—I mean this crowning phase of the battle—I am no better qualified to speak from memory than the veriest absentee from the field altogether; since, though a Guardsman at the time, I was serving on the General Staff on the left of the line, too busy with my own front to be cognisant of all that was passing on my somewhat distant right, till the sun at his setting flashed upon the backs innumerable of Frenchmen that we were chasing down hill; and that I saw, and shared in when the jubilating Prussian just arriving, who took me round the neck in his embrace, released me and my horse from captivity.—W. M. G., 1868.'

Some further excerpta from his Waterloo jottings are added:—

'It is my faith, that there were three distinct manifestations of the direct intervention of Providence in the course of the great events of 16th, 17th, and 18th of June, 1815, over the plains of Belgium.

'Of one of these the great Duke himself was conscious. Often when asked to what agency he attributed his escaping scatheless throughout the storm of battle on the 18th, while the chiefs of his staff clustering round him were one after another felled to the earth in rapid succession, his unvarying reply was "It was the hand of Providence over me."

'A second instance was:

'The state of persistent vacillation in which the corps of D'Erlon, consisting of twenty thousand men, was kept on the 16th—neither affording assistance to those in front of our-

selves, nor to Napoleon himself in front of Ligny, to whom its arrival on the Prussian right flank would have ensured the utter destruction of that army.

'And a third instance, not to be substantially accounted for by classing it in the category of "great military errors" was the unbroken bewilderment of Grouchy, and the absolute retention of his thirty-eight thousand men from the field of battle on the 18th. And surely never in the world's story has an occasion for such intervention as is here reverently pleaded for, been more signally presented for the confounding of measureless earth-rooted ambition, and of the appliances of transcendent human capacity for its gratification. Once more then, 'tis my faith, and upon the showing here presented, "que l'homme propose et Dieu dispose."' (*Dated January* 10, 1870.)

Referring to the claims of the 52nd Regiment having been overlooked in the despatches, he says it was the Duke's retort when applied to in after days to set the matter to rights, 'There was enough of glory reaped by all.'

'Colborne's (afterwards Lord Seaton) reply to Adam when wheeling up his flank—"I am wanting and going to make those fellows feel our fire"—sealed to my mind the fate of the battle of Waterloo.' (*Dated July* 1867.)

'One strongly asserted fact occurs to me as favouring the claims of the 52nd Regiment in no ordinary degree, and one which I have not seen taken advantage of by any advocate on the same side—the Duke's summons to Maitland. If it could be ascertained beyond a shadow of a doubt that the words were "Form line on front face and drive those fellows in" (or off), I think it would tell strongly in favour of the 52nd's pretensions.

'These expressions would be strictly applicable to dealing with a horde of insolent assailants, such as constituted the irregular cloud of sharpshooters preceding the gathered French onset; hardly to the advance of a majestic column in procinct, which the received opinion assumes it to have been.'

'The other version given of the Duke's words "Up Guards, and at them," or something tantamount, leaves the question more open.'

'It would never do to let the Duke's "Charge, Maitland!" and Saltoun's "Now's the time, boys!" fade from the pages of song to give place to a superfluous fiction—even of the 52nd.'

'By Wellington's orders the gunners, after discharging their pieces when the cavalry were close upon them, unlimbered the near wheel of each gun, and retired rapidly, wheeling the wheels with them, into the nearest square. Speedily the French horsemen came up and threw ropes, prepared for the purpose like the South American lasso, over the gun. But they could not make it move along on one wheel; and while striving to drag along their prize, the deadly volley of the square stretched half of those engaged on the ground, and sent the rest headlong down the slope.'

'I will here place on record the last words that fell from the lips of the Duke of Wellington addressed to myself, when I was taking leave of him at Walmer, previous to my departing for the command in India.[1]

'"The British army is what it is, because it is officered by gentlemen; men who would scorn to do a dishonourable thing and who have something more at stake before the world than a reputation for military smartness. Now the French army," he continued, "piqued themselves upon their 'esprit militaire,' and their 'honneur militaire,' and what was the consequence? Why, I kicked their 'honneur' and their 'esprit militaire' to the devil"—and he gave a kick so enthusiastic that it nearly upset him, and prompted me to lay instantly hold of his arm to enable him to recover his balance.'

[1] On September 25, 1850, Sir William Gomm was sworn in as Commander-in-Chief of India, and the following day went down to stay with, and take leave of the Duke at Walmer. The next week he started for India.

'One expression more of his to the same purport is now well known, and it is an expression that should be appropriated and cherished for itself by every first-class school in the United Kingdom: by Eton, and Harrow, and Winchester, Westminster and Shrewsbury, and various others, for its spirit applies equally to them all; the Great Duke's favourite solution of the Waterloo riddle ('L'énigme de Waterloo' of Victor Hugo) was —"The battle of Waterloo was won on the playing-fields of Eton,"—a dictum than which one pithier or more full of meaning was never uttered, and all tending to show what was the conviction in the Duke's mind, antagonistic to all schemes afloat for the democratising of our army.'

'No one, I suppose, expected an honest account of the day of Waterloo from M. Thiers; but the Bobadil spirit which pervades his whole narrative of the event, and his falsification of details, is positively astounding.

'To begin with, his account of the great attack upon our left by the 1st Corps (D'Erlon's). The attack was made, as he correctly states, in four dense columns in direct échelon from the left, covered by the fire of eighty pieces of cannon. This afforded me, a mounted officer unattached to any particular corps, being quartermaster-general of the division assailed (the 5th), the opportunity to be present at and to witness the result of each attack, or, to speak more correctly, of three of their attacks in succession after Picton's fall on our right; the fourth (Durutte's) being made on our extreme left against the villages of Papelotte and La Haye. I did so assist, and can therefore vouch from my own personal knowledge for the utter worthlessness and perversion of facts of this very French narrative.'

'The 5th (Picton's) Division marched out of Brussels, on the morning of June 16, 5,270 rank and file. After our two days' fighting we were reduced to less than one-half. The exact numbers, according to the official return, are as follows:—

		Loss on 16th at Quatre Bras.	Loss on 18th at Waterloo.
1st Royals	671	218	144
28th „	631	75	177
32nd „	699	196	174
42nd „	617	288	49
44th „	618	138	64
77th „	744	304	175
92nd „	708	286	116
95th „	482	64	156
	5170	1569	1055

Total loss of 2,624 on the two days, being more than half.

In 1837, writing to his cousin, Count Brühl, of the 1st Regiment of Cuirassiers (Prussia), he says: 'I concur with you most heartily, my dear Fritz, in all you say about the unfortunate differences to which our great Duke's evidence before the Military Commission gave rise. I anticipated some expression of wounded feeling on the part of Prussia from what I considered the injudicious and uncourteous manner in which this was set forth to the world without comment or any anxiety shown to avoid giving offence. Still General Grolman went far beyond what I expected in the shape of retort; and Muffling surprised me beyond measure, and convinced me almost that he has himself not been upon the field of Waterloo, and had never read how the English army carried on their affairs in Spain; and when I had vividly in my mind's eye, all the while I was reading their angry remarks and accusations, the picture of that tumultuous meeting and blending in, as it were, of the two armies in the full storm of advance upon the wrecks of the jointly-beaten enemy, and the cheerings and the hearty hand-shakings that were exchanged all this while (I myself was nearly dragged off my horse several times by a Prussian embrace), you may imagine what were my regrets. However, all this angry feeling will, I feel sure, quickly subside—indeed, I may safely say, has already subsided—upon both sides, let us trust, for ever, as it should do between people and armies that have at bottom the highest esteem and

admiration for each other, and confidence unbounded in each other—and well have they proved it.'

To his Aunt.

'The Duke of Wellington presented the whole of the état major of our army the other day to the Emperor of Austria and the King of France. The good old King said to us, in broken English: "I congratulate you, gentlemen, upon this result of your valour and conduct; but I am most grateful to you for your generosity and humanity towards my poor misguided people; the father and the family will for ever hold it in remembrance."' (*Dated Paris, July* 16, 1815.)

His last visit to the field[1] of Waterloo was in his eighty-fifth year, in the summer of 1868, in company with Lady Gomm, Miss Howard Vyse, and his niece Emily [now Mrs. Carr-Gomm]. In his diary of the day are these lines:—

Oft have I passed thy bounds, thou haunted field!
Since strife that made thee such hath shook the world;
And ever as I mused, a plenteous yield
Of rapt emotion hath its flag unfurled,
As o'er no second spot of earth for me.
And now the fervour passed that wakens up
Aye, for such theme as thine on memory,
The moisture gathers in its trembling cup,
Approaching thee, fair triumph's proudest goal!
What is it that can thus unnerve the soul?
Is it the judgment on time-stricken men?
Or breathes a voice a-field of power intense;
Humanity's more earnest call than when
Rang out the trumpets on my dreaming sense.

Here most fitly may we close this chapter of the life of Sir William Gomm. He had risen rapidly to the highest position and honours in his profession which were possible at his age. He had during sixteen or seventeen years of almost unceasing warfare borne his part wherever there seemed the hardest work to be done. He had with indomitable industry

[1] Though as late as 1871 he drove past Quatre Bras.

cultivated a naturally refined mind with the best studies, and in the best company. He had made himself the admiration and chief support of a most affectionate family circle. He had already gained a moderate competence, and after years of wandering was about to commence a quiet time of home service, when in the course of a few months all that seemed to make life most worth living for was taken from him. It is true that from his early boyhood he had lost both his parents, but his aunt's home had ever been to him all that an English home can and should be, and he was looking forward to his well-earned welcome there after his years of foreign homelessness.

He did return home, and his aunt (who died in 1822) did for some years survive; but otherwise his cup of happiness was broken just when he was going to put it to his lips.

He had scarcely put off the mourning for the constant friend and centre of the family, Miss Goldsworthy (the Goully of his letters), who died in March 1816, when he had to bury his only surviving brother at Geneva, and was then just too late, though hurrying home in obedience to a summons from his aunt, to close the eyes of his beloved only sister, who died after a short illness on December 10, 1817.

When next we are able to follow his life in his own writing it seems almost the life of another being. The character of the times is changed from constant war to a long peace. The correspondents are different; and as a married man, whose wife was ever at his side, he had no regular home correspondence as before, and the story of his life is only followed among certainly less interesting scenes—in the drier pages of diaries, rather than in the bright animating letters to a sister.

From verses written in 1818:—

To his Sister.

Emblem of purity, from earth withdrawn!
Sister, beloved erewhile; now seraph bright!
May I not mourn thee, snatched to realms of light,
While yet thy star of hope was in its dawn?

Thou only full prepared; all else forlorn,
Disconsolate. Thou ever wing'd for flight;
We only lost in suddenness of night.
Thou but awaken'd to eternal morn,
Dear saint on earth! Blest vision, 'mid the skies!
Shall not thy worth unteach us to complain?
Alas! we rashly grieve o'er broken ties!
Thou, bliss embosom'd, past the bounds of pain!
Rather be ours thy memory well to prize,
And show to earth thou wert not lent in vain!

My sister! We were wont in earlier day
To hold sweet converse, though seas roll'd between,
Chief solace of my wanderings hath it been,
With thee in mental intercourse to stray;
And oft, at closing of some battle-fray,
Thy form in fever'd vision have I seen,
And thou hast gaz'd, methought, with smile serene,
Upon some guerdon freshly borne away!
Thou wert my favouring spirit here below,
And from thy loveliness of soul I drew
Such sympathies as angels give to flow,
And such as oft have cleared my grosser view.
Shall I not still, as then, observance owe,
Thy charge unchanged—alone thy dwelling new?

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